

HCSS StratMon 2015

# THE RETURN OF GHOSTS HOPED PAST?

GLOBAL TRENDS IN CONFLICT  
AND COOPERATION



HCSS helps governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to understand the fast-changing environment and seeks to anticipate the challenges of the future with practical policy solutions and advice.



## THE RETURN OF GHOSTS HOPED PAST? GLOBAL TRENDS IN CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

HCSS StratMon 2015

*The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*

ISBN/EAN: 978-94-92102-25-6

**Authors** Tim Sweijs, Stephan De Spiegeleire, Kelsey Shantz, Frank Bekkers

**Contributions by** Mikhail Akimov, Katarina Kertysova

**HCSS Project Team** Jasper Ginn, Willem Theo Oosterveld, Erik Frinking, Willem Auping, Roberta Coelho, Kelsey Shantz, Mikhail Akimov, Juncal Fernández-Garayzábal González, Cameron Reed, Ludy de Vos, Sijbren de Jong, Paula Faber, Joshua Polchar, Katarina Kertysova, Frank Bekkers, Stephan De Spiegeleire, Tim Sweijs (Research Project Leader)

The HCSS StratMon Program offers strategic assessments of global risks to Dutch national security. The Program has received financial support from the Dutch Government within the context of the Dutch Government's Strategic Monitor.

© 2015 *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies. All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced and/or published in any form by print, photo print, microfilm or any other means without prior written permission from HCSS. All images are subject to the licenses of their respective owners.

**Graphic Design** Joshua Polchar & Studio Maartje de Sonnaville

**Print** de Swart

*The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*

Lange Voorhout 16  
2514 EE The Hague  
The Netherlands

info@hcss.nl  
HCSS.NL

# THE RETURN OF GHOSTS HOPED PAST?

GLOBAL TRENDS IN CONFLICT AND  
COOPERATION

HCSS StratMon 2015

*The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	15
2 THE GHOSTS OF TIMES HOPED PAST	21
2.1 RUSSIA: FROM ASSERTIVENESS TO AGGRESSION	21
2.2 TERRITORIAL DISPUTES	24
2.3 RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE	25
2.4 EBOLA AND EPIDEMICS	28
3 TRENDS IN VIOLENCE	31
3.1 AN OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL VIOLENCE	31
3.2 TAKING A CLOSER LOOK	33
3.3 VIOLENT DEATHS	35
3.4 HIGH CASUALTY TERRORIST BOMBINGS	38
3.5 CONFLICT HOT SPOTS	39
3.6 VIOLENCE OUTLOOK	43
4 BEYOND VIOLENCE: INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN PERSPECTIVE	45
4.1 CONFLICT AND COOPERATION SINCE 1979	48
4.2 STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS	49
4.3 TYPES OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION	51
4.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES IN CONFLICT AND COOPERATION	52
4.5 THE NETHERLANDS IN THE WORLD	57
4.6 WHY BALANCED NET ASSESSMENT MATTERS FOR DEFENSE AND SECURITY PLANNERS	67
5 CONCLUSION	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY	79

# MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

For decades Europe has lived in peace and prosperity. But in recent years ‘ghosts of times hoped past’, rather than manifesting themselves in far away places like deep Africa, Afghanistan or the South-China Sea, have once again edged closer towards Europe’s borders. Russia annexed Crimea. The Ebola virus sowed death and destruction in Western Africa but also found its way to Spain and the United Kingdom. And Europe was shocked to see various European citizens join, fight, massacre and die amongst the ranks of the Islamic State (IS) movement. One of the dominant narratives to emerge from current security debates insists that some particularly ghoulish ghosts from the past are back on European soil. These ghosts are incontestably real, representing formidable challenges that require thoughtful analysis and serious attention.

This year, the Netherlands faces important choices regarding its overall defense and security posture for the years to come. What security risks does it need to prepare for in light of recent developments? What types of capabilities are required to both prevent and defend against these risks? When, where and with whom should these capabilities be brought to bear? And should the security and defense budget – which has seen a downward trend for two decades – be increased in support of all this?

The long-term security impact of reappearing ghosts from the past is an important consideration in answering these questions. This dominant storyline, however, is but one part of the story. It is necessary to also assess broader security trends in order to establish a balanced view of both the conflictual and the cooperative sides of the international security coin. To that purpose, the Dutch ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Security and Justice have established the Strategic Monitor, in collaboration with Clingendael and *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies* (HCSS).

*Monitor* comes from the Latin verb *monere*, meaning “to admonish, warn, advise”. In our context, this suggests that the purpose of a Monitor should not just be observational, but also prudential or even *contrarian*: to alert decision-makers to trends and developments they tend to miss, ignore or discard. To that end, since its first contributions to the Dutch Government’s Strategic Monitor, HCSS has argued for and worked towards a multi-perspective approach of an increasingly complex and dynamic futurespace. HCSS has developed, and continues to develop, a rich portfolio of datasets, tools and methods to furnish analytical insights to support strategic decision making in the defense and security domain.

This 2015 HCSS Annual Report summarizes the key insights from studies on four ghosts hoped past: Russia’s Assertiveness, Territorial Disputes, Religious Violence, and Epidemics. This is then complemented by an overview of global trends in violence and an assessment of conflict and cooperation in the international system. The conclusion synthesizes the findings.

### THE ‘GHOST STORY’

**Russia’s aggression.** HCSS already chronicled Russia’s growing international assertiveness last year. This assertiveness has now morphed into a different category altogether: naked aggression. Once again, militarily potent non-status-quo peer competitors represent a clear and present threat to our security. We particularly highlighted the extent to which Russia’s political leadership is actively fusing patriotic-militaristic elements into its dangerous mix of historical resentment, jingoism and anti-Western propaganda. Russia blends (some) high-end military capabilities with a variety of other military and non-military threats. We expect that this potent ‘hybrid’ mixture will lead to some real soul searching about the appropriate capability portfolio to meet this challenge – and maybe even to a more fundamental rethink regarding how we do strategic planning in general.

**Territorial disputes** are the single largest source of interstate conflicts, in the past as well as the present: 51 out of 89 currently ongoing interstate conflicts involve territorial disputes. Over the past seven decades, the (still significant) decline in territorial conflict has been slower than the decline in overall conflict. Territorial conflicts are much more likely to erupt into violence than non-territorial ones; tend to last longer; are more difficult to settle; and are more apt

to be reciprocated and to recur. The implications for defense and security organizations (DSOs) are relatively straightforward: boost anticipation, e.g. monitoring and early warning mechanisms, and prevention; counter ‘territorial’ narratives; support international judicial institutions that arbitrate between conflict parties; promote confidence building measures; put greater emphasis on A2AD (anti-access/area denial) strategies to impede possible territorial competitors; and deter conflict actors.

**Religious violence** has been on the rise over the past quarter century. Religious conflicts are endemic to the Middle East, South Asia and North, Central, East and West Africa. They increasingly fuse local and global grievances, thereby transcending national borders as in the case of global Jihad. Increasingly, religious violence is also employed by non-state actors targeting other non-state actors. And it is once again becoming more deadly, claiming last year the highest number of fatalities in the past 25 years. This is a cause for serious concern since we know that religious conflict actors are often willing to make great sacrifices to achieve their demands. The radicalization and isolation of religious extremist groups makes it harder to end the cycle of violence because the ‘doves’ often lose out against the ‘hawks’. Religious violence only very seldom ends as the result of the military defeat of religious extremist groups. It is commonly recognized that dealing with religious violence requires a whole-of-society approach which will never be primarily military in nature. DSOs can nevertheless make a host of contributions. Some of them are of a traditional military nature. Most, however, are more about persuasion than coercion, and more about collaboration rather than control. The sustainability of such long-term efforts should be a central element in their design.

**Ebola’s** societal toll ranges beyond the directly affected victims. The 2014 outbreak overwhelmed national health care systems and paralyzed affected societies for extended periods of time, even considering that the Ebola disease did not turn out to be the catastrophic pandemic that many of the initial projections said it would be. We conducted an analysis making use of quantitative system dynamics modeling to identify lessons learned for how to deal with future incarnations of epidemic or pandemic diseases. Both timing and scaling are quintessential components of an international intervention. Even at the risk of ringing a false alarm, the deployment of intervention capabilities should take place as early as possible in the initial exponential phase

of the epidemic. If direct disease control fails, intervention may require additional non-medical intervention methods too. As a rule, international medical interventions are supported by non-medical measures, such as protective measures, coordination services and logistics. Typically, DSOs play an active role in delivering such support. In their role as international disaster responders, they must be prepared to move in rapidly once it becomes clear that the existing in-place capacity is insufficient. Even if DSOs are not in the lead, they should be part of the anticipation and preparation phase. During actual deployment they may have to be called upon to provide logistical assistance and support to public authorities to maintain stability and public order.

### THE BROADER PICTURE

**The end of the downward trend in conflict?** Traditional interstate war has become a relatively rare phenomenon since the end of the Second World War. There has been no great power war since the 1953 Korean War. Both interstate and societal conflict declined notably through the 1990s and into the 2000s. But since 2003, the decline in societal conflict has stalled. Is this a temporary lull or the onset of a reversal of the downward trend?

A closer look at various measurements of violence across time reveals that the downward trend certainly is stalling. The number of annual battle deaths according to the UCDP is lower than at its peak levels in 1990 and 1999, but has seen an increase over the past decade. If we consider fatalities due to violence in conflicts both on and outside of the battlefield, the picture looks considerably worse. Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have remained the deadliest wars from 2013 to 2014, with all three having seen a spike in fatalities. The number of high casualty (15 casualties or more) terrorist bombings are also up dramatically, with over 80% of the lives lost to terrorist activity in 2013 occurring in just 5 countries: Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan. The dramatic increase in high casualty terrorist bombings since 2001 is almost entirely due to Islamic extremists.

One conspicuous trend of recent years is the *contagion* and *spill-over* of many of the contemporary conflicts in the Sahel region, in the Middle East, Northern Africa and in Southwest Asia in particular. Some of these zones of anarchy have evolved into regional distribution hubs. Libya is a case in point. A particular risk for the next coming years is these conflict zones conjoining. With continuing

instability or weak and ineffective governments in Chad, the Central African Republic, the Sudans, Libya and Egypt, the conflict in Nigeria is now threatening to cleave from West Africa through Central Africa to East Africa and the Middle East.

Another striking trend is the *fusion* of various types of conflict. Transnational armed movements interfere in internal armed conflicts, thereby transforming not only local conflict dynamics, but also redefining the scope and the character of the conflict. In a similar vein, the involvement of foreign states turns previously localized internal armed conflicts into murky multilayered conflicts - which are not easily classified using existing nomenclature. The conflict in Syria, for instance, is not one conflict but spans many. The internal armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine is also an internationalized internal armed conflict as a result of Russia's (unacknowledged) interference. In such contexts it becomes hard to identify not only the enemy but also the type of conflict DSOs are engaged in. In the case of adversaries such as IS it is hard and perhaps impossible to define a strategic center of gravity. And strategists and practitioners in the West are now pondering how to react and respond in the face of the hybrid warfare tactics of Russia.

**Beyond violence: conflict and cooperation.** Still, there is a great deal more international cooperation in the world than there is international conflict. Relying on the massive GDELT dataset of international relations events, we do not see any dramatic trends upwards or downwards in overall conflict or cooperation. Countries 'talk' a lot to each other, especially cooperatively. When we exclude the 'nice talk', we find more material conflict than material cooperation. The latter seems to be edging upwards, exclusively due to more cooperation between non-state actors, but state-actors engage in fewer cooperative events. We observe a noticeable and fairly steady rise in the relative importance of non-state actors since the beginning of this millennium. The double-dip in the global economy has led to two small upticks in the role of states, but the overall trend seems solid.

**Europe and the Netherlands.** Despite all of the current intra-EU troubles and even despite Russia's aggressive stance, Europe in 2014 remained the leading stable island of international cooperation in a much more checkered global landscape. The Netherlands sits in the overall enviable position of being

the target of very few conflictual events of either a verbal or material nature. We saw the outpouring of international (verbal) support for the Netherlands in the week of July 17 when MH17 was downed. The Netherlands – in contrast to its reputation as an increasingly Europe-skeptical country – maintained a highly positive attitude towards (most of) its European neighbors. The two leading countries in the international system, the United States and China, were in the top-two percentile of the countries showing a most positive attitude towards the Netherlands. The problem countries that stand out as showing the most negative attitude vis-à-vis the Netherlands include Venezuela but also Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco.

### SUMMING UP

Based on HCSS's monitoring effort of this year, it is undeniably true that Europe is increasingly confronting real and urgent security challenges. Recent times have seen the re-emergence of some ghosts hoped past close to or on European soil. A broader overview of global violence in the international system shows that the downward trend is stagnating and, indeed, slightly reversed. But at the same time we observe that, based on year-to-year country-level datasets, global fragility is still down while global societal resilience is up. And despite all of the current intra-EU troubles, Europe continues to be a haven of international cooperation – both as a 'recipient' and as a 'donor' of cooperation. Overall, we therefore arrive at a decidedly mixed view. As Dutch Armed Forces Commander General Tom Middendorp eloquently said in March 2015 at the 2015 Future Force Conference – these may very well be the best of times *and* the worst of times. While the current dangers are clear and present, it is important not to fall prey to a too one-sidedly negative view of the security situation. If our DSOs were to only focus on the threat side of the coin, we fear they will lose out on a lot of strategic opportunities to further optimize the country's defense and security contributions to international security and stability. And not just internationally, but also *domestically*, to 'carry along' a society and a polity that is certainly willing to support defense and security, but harbors in some cases legitimate questions about the value-for-money proposition of our current security capability portfolio.

The security challenges we face are real. They require urgent attention but also creative solutions. As Albert Einstein remarked, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. This year's findings once

again strengthen us in our conviction that there is a high need for a more ‘future-centric’ approach to defense and security planning. Such an approach does not start from an existing capability portfolio, but from a balanced assessment of the overall security futurespace; of the security and defense effects the Netherlands is willing to pursue across it; and then of the capability choices that derive from those. Part of this endeavor is a willingness to envisage a broader notion of ‘armed force’, one in which DSOs not only operate as firefighters that come in after the outbreak of conflict, but act as comprehensive custodians of defense and security. It is time to contemplate a broader portfolio of instruments-of-influence – one that includes instruments that not only allow DSOs to forcefully intervene whenever things go wrong, but to also and equally forcefully strengthen some of the many positive structural trends that we still observe in the international system.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Security and defense policymakers in ancient Rome relied on a special band of priests called *augurs* to anticipate the future. In matters of war and peace, these *augurs* were called upon to interpret the gods' will and to predict the future through close study of the patterns in the flights of birds. Augur expert judgment immediately fed into the deliberations of Roman policy makers.<sup>1</sup> Over two thousand years later, anticipating, preventing and preparing for future conflict remains the bread and butter of strategic planners of European defense and security organizations (DSOs). The way in which they approach these problems, however, has changed significantly and continues to improve.

Most planners have come to accept that crystal balls do not exist. As one senior American official aptly put it: *'We have a perfect record in predicting future wars – right? ... And that record is 0 percent.'*<sup>2</sup> This acquired wisdom is continuously nurtured by rapidly unfolding developments in the security environment in recent years. From the Arab Spring to the Arab Winter, and from the Russia Reset to Russia's Resurgence: time and again we are reminded that 'prediction is difficult, especially about the future'.<sup>3</sup> Such folksy truisms are increasingly supported by empirical studies that highlight the poor predictive record of the expert community at large.<sup>4</sup> Yet our DSOs still have to decide on how and where to spend hundreds of billions – in 2014 for a grand total of

---

1 M. Tullius Cicero, "Divination Book I, Section 1," in *De Senectute De Amicitia De Divinatione*, ed. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923). See Book 1 Section 1-5 esp. Cicero continues to express his doubts in the remainder of the book concerning the use and utility of *auguria*.

2 Micah Zenko, "100% Right 0% of the Time," *Foreign Policy*, October 16, 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/16/100-right-0-of-the-time/>.

3 For a discussion on the many attributions of this quote, see Niels Bohr, "The Perils of Prediction, June 2nd," *The Economist*, accessed April 22, 2015, [http://www.economist.com/blogs/theinbox/2007/07/the\\_perils\\_of\\_prediction\\_june](http://www.economist.com/blogs/theinbox/2007/07/the_perils_of_prediction_june).

4 Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment How Good Is It? How Can We Know?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

\$1,776 billion worldwide – in order to safeguard the future security of our societies.<sup>5</sup>

What does a security and defense planner need to know about the future security environment in order to be able to make prudent decisions? And how can the analytical community furnish that knowledge? These are the central questions that have guided HCSS' contributions to the Dutch government's *Strategic Monitor* since our first report in 2013. In that first 'programmatic' edition, we presented our overall approach to what we call 'strategic orientation and navigation guidance' (STRONG).<sup>6</sup> We argued that in an ever more complex world prudent decision-makers have to go beyond 'predictions' or even a small set of 'scenarios' in their attempts to prepare themselves for the future. What they require is deeper insight into what we called the 'futurespace'.<sup>7</sup> Since that futurespace is becoming increasingly multi-dimensional and dynamic, we recommended they put more effort into sketching and exploring it than they have done heretofore.

Yet appetite for strategic foresight is extremely limited. And what little of it is done often falls prey to simple coherent narratives: "the world is becoming more/less X"; "that country is becoming more/less Y"; "the importance of Z is increasing/decreasing". Depending on their cultural, educational, ideological, geographical, etc. background, strategic decision-makers often pick their own guiding narrative from various available narrative elements they find plausible and/or appealing. Doing so they rarely realize what a partial representation of the futurespace it contains or how many alternative ways there may be to frame it. Most decision-makers tend to think (and to subsequently bolster the conviction) that their narrative is the right one, and that the others are ill

---

5 Sam Perlo-Freeman et al., *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2014*, SIPRI Fact Sheet (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), April 2015), <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1504.pdf>.

6 *Licht op de Toekomst, Zeven Perspectieven op de Toekomstige Veiligheidsomgeving [Light in the Darkness - Seven Perspectives on the Future Security Environment]* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), February 2012). See also Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *STRONG in the 21st Century: Strategic Orientation and Navigation Guidance under Deep Uncertainty* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2010).

7 Scientists in different disciplines have come to talk about 'problem spaces', 'option spaces' and 'solution spaces'. In all of these, the term 'space' is used to suggest a mental representation of the different dimensions within which these 'problems', 'options', 'solutions' can be positioned and analyzed. We have suggested the term 'futurespace' for the analogous mental representation of the different dimensions of the future.

conceived. 2014 once again confronted us with the painful reality that the clash between such simple, idiosyncratic narratives about the past, present and future can literally be deadly. Russia and IS both have strategic narratives that are in many ways diametrically opposed to ours. The political entrepreneurs behind these narratives use them as weapons in pursuit of their own strategic ambitions – which can lead to disastrous consequences, as materialized in the spilled blood of the tens of thousands of victims of the wars in Ukraine and in the Levant.

None of us can escape our background. And yet most of us recognize that this is precisely what we have to do in order to internalize a properly dynamic and diverse perspective on the entire futurespace that confronts us. How can prudent decision-makers break out of this strategic Catch-22? HCSS' response can be captured in a single word: multi-perspectivism. We think it critical to keep thinking about the future not as a single, stable dot-on-the-horizon towards which the strategic decision-makers have to steer their ship, but as a kaleidoscopic, multi-dimensional futurespace that has to be prudently navigated. STRONG, therefore, requires a different approach to 'monitoring' from strategic decision-makers and foresighters alike. The former have to be willing to constantly entertain multiple plausible futures in their heads. They must remain open towards different cultural, ideological, professional, etc. points of views. STRONG also demands they put significant thought – much more than we are currently able to muster – into designing a strategic options portfolio that is robust across the entire futurespace.<sup>8</sup>

---

8 We have provided some initial thoughts on this in “Strategic Agility and Defence Capability Options: Who Says Generals Can’t Dance?,” in *Deelverkenning III: Aanbodzijde. Houvast Voor de Krijgsmacht van de Toekomst [Future Policy Survey]* (The Netherlands Ministry of Defence, 2010).

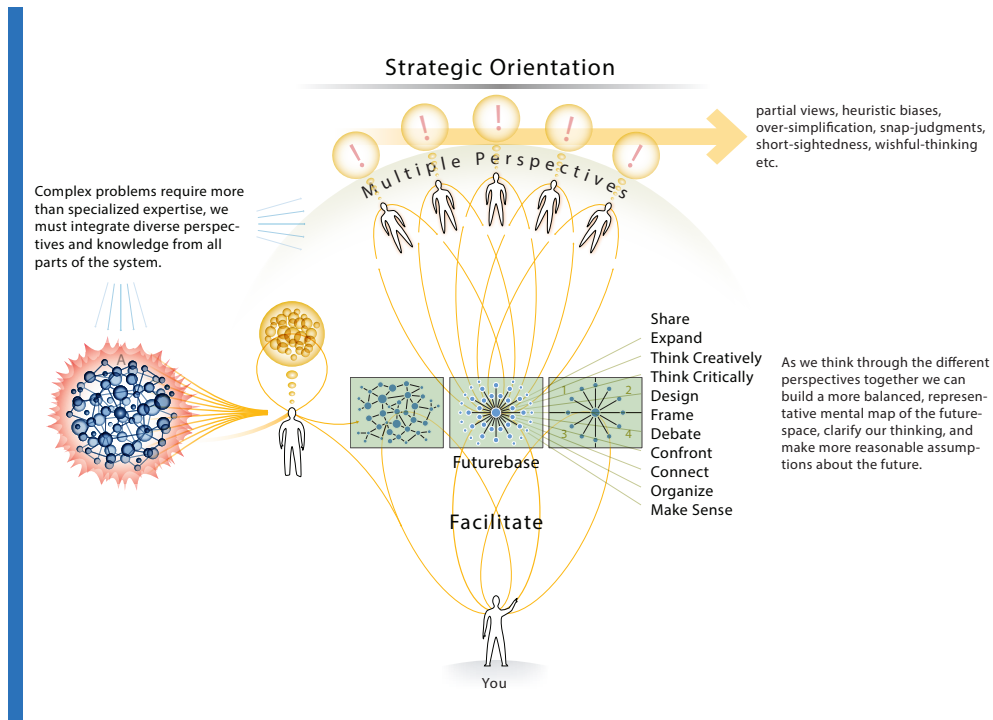


FIGURE 1. MULTI-PERSPECTIVISM IN ACTION.<sup>9</sup>

But **STRONG** also implies a different approach to strategic foresight itself. The dual challenge behind this approach is nicely captured by the two different meanings of the word ‘monitor’. A ‘monitor’ is an instrument that is used for observing, checking, or keeping a continuous record of an entity or a process. In our context, this suggests a focus on past and ongoing events and developments that have to be inventoried, scanned and analyzed. But the etymological root of the word ‘monitor’ also suggests a second, somewhat different interpretation. *Monitor* comes from the Latin verb *monere*, meaning “to admonish, warn, advise”. In our context, this suggests that the purpose of the monitoring effort should not just be observational but also prudential: to alert decision-makers to trends and developments they tend to miss, ignore or dismiss.

This dual nature of a ‘monitor’ – one more *factual* and the other more *contrarian* – suggests that foresight work should be balanced in nature. It cannot and

9 Copyright Marshall Clemens, with permission for HCSS.

should not avoid presenting and fleshing out the (spoken or unspoken) intuitions that guide the strategic debates in a country. But strategic foresight is at its most useful when it is not only reflective of the concerns of today but also illuminative on the possible, and potentially different, concerns of tomorrow. It should bring up new and unexpected insights into possible future threats or opportunities that current stakeholders are unlikely to focus on. We therefore carefully nurture the contrarian side in our foresight work. Two years ago, for instance, Europe's DSOs were very much focused on the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In our contribution to the Strategic Monitor that year HCSS paid attention to those developments along Europe's Southern flank, but at the same time also pointed out that Europe's Eastern borders remained highly unstable. We continue to aspire to such a balanced approach, also in this year's monitor.

We have developed, and continue to develop, a rich portfolio of datasets, tools and methods to assist us in constantly providing different perceptions to decision-makers.<sup>10</sup> In this annual report we start out by summarizing some of the key insights from four studies on topics that were selected in close coordination with the Ministries that spearhead the Dutch Government's Strategic Monitor effort: Russia's Assertiveness, Territorial Disputes, Religious Violence and Epidemics. The analysis of these four topics – which are very much on the radar screens of our DSOs – is then complemented by an overview of global trends in violence followed by a broader assessment of conflict and cooperation in the international system. The conclusion sums it all up.

---

<sup>10</sup> Some of these are publicly accessible on the web-based platform <http://studies.hcss.nl/>.

# 2 THE GHOSTS OF TIMES HOPED PAST

Old specters are once again haunting Europe. For many decades, Europe has worked relentlessly to banish those demons from its soil. The result was one of the longest periods of peace and prosperity. Some argue that this particularly propitious security environment was ‘secured’ by a powerful hegemon that allowed Europe to develop in a US-made and -supported cocoon. Others emphasize Europe’s own role, creativity and efforts. But in recent years ghosts of times hoped past have been edging closer towards Europe’s borders once again.

Some discern, in these all too real developments, the shadows of the biblical ‘horsemen of the apocalypse’ – commonly depicted as Conquest, Famine, Pestilence and Death. Rather than being far away in places like deep Africa, Afghanistan, or the South-China Sea, in 2014 the horsemen made their presence felt on European shores. Russia annexed Crimea. The Ebola virus sowed death and destruction in Western Africa but also found its way to Spain and the United Kingdom. And Europe was shocked to see various European citizens join, fight, massacre and die amongst the ranks of IS, and to feel the reverberations of this deep in its own immigrant communities. It can therefore not come as a surprise that one of the dominant narratives to emerge from European security debates these past few years insists that a number of particularly ghoulish ghosts from the past are back on European soil. In our contribution to this year’s Strategic Monitor, HCSS decided to subject some of these ghosts to a more in-depth analysis. The sections below sum up the key findings for the four studies.

## **2.1 RUSSIA: FROM ASSERTIVENESS TO AGGRESSION**

In our study *From Assertiveness to Aggression. 2014 – A Watershed Year for the Russian Federation*, we characterized 2014 as a watershed year for the Russian Federation and for its relationship with the West. HCSS had already chronicled Russia’s growing international assertiveness in its contribution to

the Strategic Monitor last year.<sup>11</sup> This year we concluded that this assertiveness has now morphed into a different category altogether: naked aggression. Russia became the first European country since the end of the Second World War to expand its own territory at the expense of another European country through the threat as well as the use of military force. This represents an egregious transgression of many foundational and deeply internalized international and – especially – European habits, norms, conventions and laws that no ethno-cultural, historical, religious or other pretexts can obfuscate. For the Netherlands, that sees itself as one of the world’s staunchest proponents of international law and that hosts some of its most venerable institutions, such a cavalier abuse of international law hits hard. The country’s moral and political indignation over Russia’s aggression in Ukraine transformed itself into much sharper and more personal shock and dismay on July 17, 2014. On that day almost 200 Dutch citizens fell victim to the downing of a civilian airliner (MH17) over a conflict zone in which, by President Putin’s own admission, Russia had itself interfered militarily. The Netherlands had assiduously nurtured long and deep ties with Russia and had made extraordinary efforts to commit itself to Russia’s transformation. Given the nature and historical underpinnings of Dutch relations with Russia, the aftershocks are likely to reverberate for a long time to come.

This qualitative change in Russia’s behavior represents a particularly acute challenge to Western defense and security planners. For the past few decades, this community – legitimately, in our eyes – downplayed that part of the security futurespace in which militarily potent non-status-quo peer competitors represented a clear and present military threat to our security. This allowed us to redirect our attention to other challenges such as failed states, global terrorism, etc. After 2014, we can no longer afford this luxury. President Putin crossed a Rubicon through his actions in Ukraine. Even more ominous are the changes our overview described in Russia’s military posture and especially its readiness in 2014. We particularly highlighted the extent to which Russia’s political leadership is actively fusing patriotic-militaristic elements into its dangerous blend of historical resentment, jingoism and anti-Western propaganda.

---

11 Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014).





FIGURE 2. RUSSIAN PRESIDENT PUTIN CELEBRATING 'VICTORY-DAY' IN SEVASTOPOL JUST AFTER THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA.<sup>12</sup>

We submit that Russia's 2014 gambit will require a serious rethink of the capability portfolio of our DSOs. Like the other ghosts of times past we describe in this section, the resurgent specter of the 'Soviet threat' mixes elements of the (still fairly recent) past with a number of novelties into a threat that many pundits now qualify as 'hybrid'. Because it blends (some) high-end military capabilities with a variety of other military and non-military threats, the Russian ogre represents one of the biggest challenges to our European DSOs for decades. We already see this potent admixture triggering increases in defense spending in certain parts of the Alliance. We expect that it will lead to some real soul-searching about the appropriate capability portfolio to meet this challenge – and maybe even to a more fundamental rethink in the way in which we do strategic planning (or design) in general.<sup>13</sup>

12 "Celebrating Victory Day and the 70th Anniversary of Sevastopol's Liberation," President of Russia, May 9, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20990>.

13 For some early examples, see Stephan De Spiegeleire et al., *Designing Future Stabilization Efforts* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), September 2014).; and *Designing New Policy Options for Dealing with a New Russia* (forthcoming).



## 2.2 TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

In our study *Pushing the Boundaries: Territorial Conflict in Today's World* we have taken a closer look at what we know about territorial conflict. Our overview shows that rumors of the demise of territorial quarrels are greatly exaggerated. 51 out of 89 currently ongoing interstate conflicts involve territorial disputes.<sup>14</sup> The relative share of territorial conflict in overall interstate conflict has even increased in the past few decades – mostly because the (still significant) decline in territorial conflict has been slower than the decline in overall conflict. Most of these remaining territorial conflicts are outside of Europe. Despite having the highest density of countries in the world, Europe has the fewest territorial disputes, all of which are low-intensity and around its fringes. Europe's aversion to these types of conflicts is well supported by the empirical evidence and the theoretical literature. We know that territorial disputes are the single largest source of interstate conflicts – in the past as well as the present. The probability that a conflict erupts into violence increases eightfold when territory is involved. Territorial conflicts also tend to last longer than non-territorial ones. Between 1901 and 2008, territorial conflicts lasted on average for 20.6 years, while non-territorial conflicts lasted around 13.7 years. Territorial conflicts are more difficult to settle than non-territorial conflicts. Militarized conflicts over territory have also been found to produce more fatalities. And territorial disputes are more apt to be reciprocated and to recur.

Some territorial disputes are more dangerous than others; disputes involving ethnic claims are most war-prone, followed by disputes involving strategic territory. Perhaps surprisingly, the presence of economic resources tends to marginally reduce the chances of conflict. The most dangerous trigger for conflict escalation is the moment when a hardline political leader takes over the reins of political power. The implications for our DSOs are relatively straightforward: boost anticipation, e.g. monitoring and early warning mechanisms, and prevention; 'battle' against self-serving parochial/territorial narratives to prevent the outbreak of territorial conflict; support international judicial institutions that arbitrate between conflict parties; promote confidence

---

14 According to the most recent data available of The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIC) at the time of publication. For more details see our study: Willem Oosterveld, Stephan De Spiegeleire, and Tim Sweijs, "Pushing the Boundaries: Territorial Conflict in Today's World," in *Strategic Monitor 2015* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015).

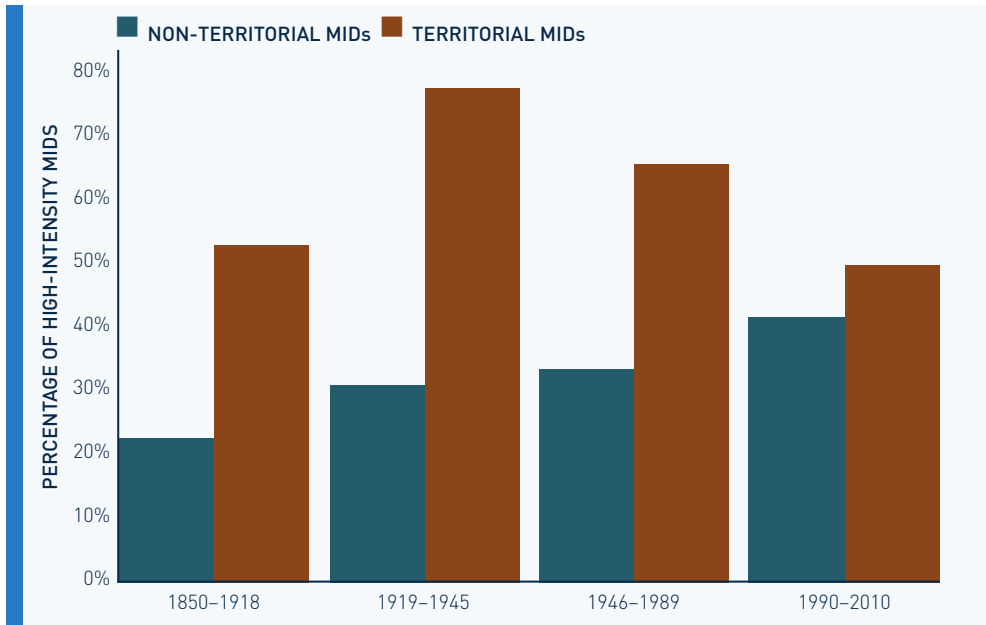


FIGURE 3. TERRITORIAL VS. NON-TERRITORIAL DISPUTES AND THE USE OF ARMED FORCE 1815-2010.<sup>15</sup>

building measures between warring parties; put greater emphasis on A2AD (anti-access/area denial) strategies to impede possible territorial competitors;<sup>16</sup> and deter conflict actors.

### 2.3 RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

In our study *Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence* we assessed religious violence by looking at what sets it apart from ‘regular’ violence and what we know about its past and present. We duly noted the steady rise of the number of religious conflicts over the past quarter century. Many Europeans have

15 Ibid. We have distinguished territorial disputes from non-territorial MIDs by rev. type, where 1=territory (see Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and David J. Singer, “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 178 and the accompanying codebooks of “Militarized Interstate Disputes (v4.1),” *The Correlates of War Project*, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs>). We have compared percentage of territorial versus non-territorial conflicts with 1-3 (green) compared to 4-5 (brown) of conflict intensities. We take inference of intensity from the MID ‘Hostility Level of Dispute’, where 1 indicates no militarized action, 2 and 3 the threat of or display of force, respectively, 4 the use of force, and 5 war. For the purposes of this research, we have generalized disputes coded as 1-3 as non-violent, and those coded as 4-5 as showing incidents of violence or war. For access to the datasets and the codebook, see Ibid..

16 That is, tip the offensive-defensive balance to favor the latter.

but the faintest of recollections of the many centuries of bloody fratricidal wars that followed the Reformation and that lingered on until recently in various degrees of inter-confessional tensions between different religious groups. Today, religious conflicts are endemic to the Middle East, South Asia and North, Central, East and West Africa. They involve adherents of many different faiths. We also pointed out that religious violence is evolving. It increasingly fuses local and global grievances, thereby transcending national borders as in the case of global Jihad. It is also increasingly employed by non-state actors targeting other non-state actors. And it is once again becoming more deadly, claiming last year the highest number of fatalities in the past 25 years. This is a cause for serious concern since we know that religious conflict actors are different from many other ones. They are often willing to make great sacrifices to achieve their demands. The clear lines they draw between 'in-group' and 'out-group' make violent acts against non-combatants more likely to be sanctioned by extremist religious leaders. The radicalization and isolation of religious extremist groups makes it harder to end the cycle of violence because the 'doves' often lose out against the 'hawks'. We also know that conflicts featuring religious violence tend to last longer than regular conflicts and are less likely to end through negotiated settlement.

Religious violence comes in many different forms and guises and is caused by a diverse and wide array of factors. There is no single root cause. If one pattern holds it is that the structural roots of religious violence are largely similar to those of non-religious violence. These include – but are certainly not limited to – societal fragility, low state effectiveness and legitimacy, repression and social exclusion. Religious violence is more likely to surface when and where religious intergroup differences are reinforced by additional cleavages such as horizontal socio-economic inequalities, discrimination, and geographic distance. The politicization of these interreligious differences by political and/or religious leaders boosts further societal polarization, which increases the likelihood of violence. The presence or emergence of extremist actors in societies is a final dangerous conflict trigger. Both individual and situational characteristics render individuals prone to embracing extremist beliefs. Again there is no one-size-fits all profile. Attempts at profiling therefore often miss the mark. Religious violence only very seldom ends as the result of the military defeat of religious extremist groups. Declining levels of religious violence are more often the result of the physical separation of warring groups, their generational demise, the de-radicalization of key members, and their integration in regular political processes following negotiated settlements.

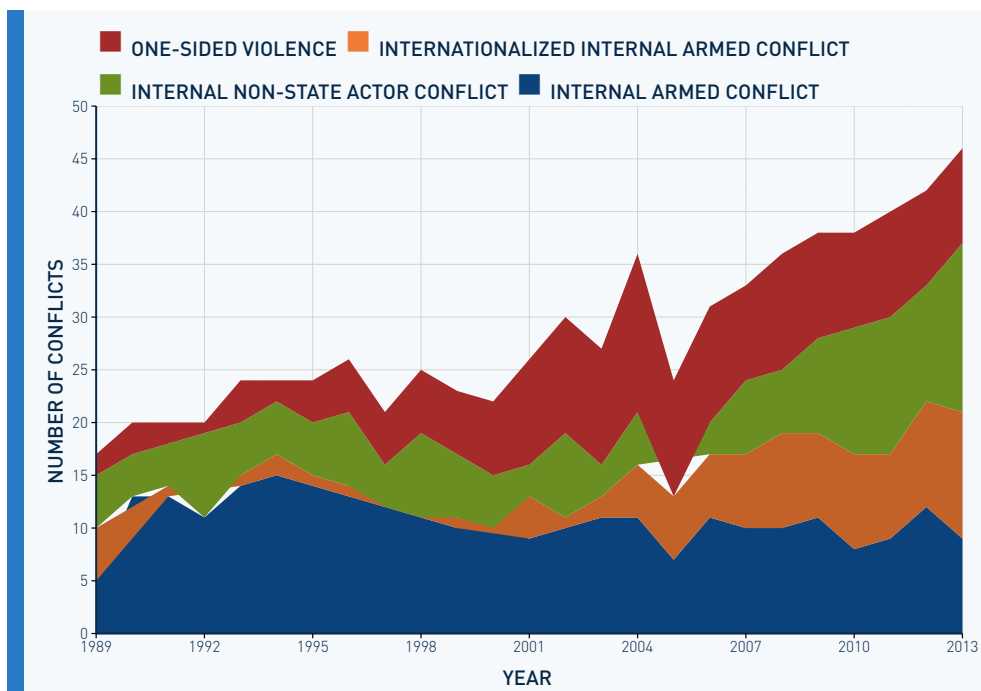


FIGURE 4. NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS ACROSS DIFFERENT CONFLICT TYPES, 1989-2013.<sup>17</sup>

17 See Tim Swejjs, Jasper Ginn, and Stephan De Spiegeleire, “Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence,” in *Strategic Monitor 2015* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015). We created a dataset of religious violence by reviewing the UCDP data sets on battle-related deaths, one-sided violence and non-state actors and coding those events in which at least one religious actor was present. An event is included in our dataset if it corresponds to the following definition: “The use of violence, involving at least one self-proclaimed religious non-state actor, directed at civilians, organized groups or governments of states, resulting in at least 25 civilian or battle-related deaths per year.” Although our measure is likely to underestimate fatalities of religious violence due to that threshold, it does reveal important trends at the macro-level about the dynamics of such violence over the past quarter century. We assess different incarnations of religious violence, including internal armed conflict and internationalized internal armed conflicts, internal non-state actor conflict and one-sided violence. Data and definitions used have been adapted from the following UCDP datasets: Therése Pettersson, “UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset Codebook (Version 5.0-2014)” (Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), June 2014); Therése Pettersson, “UCDP Non-State Conflict Codebook (Version 2.5-2014)” (Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014); Therése Pettersson, “UCDP One-Sided Violence Codebook (Version 1.4-June,2014)” (Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), June 2014); Lotta Themnér, “UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook (Version 4-2014a)” (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014).

It is commonly recognized that dealing with religious violence requires a whole-of-society approach that will never be primarily military in nature. DSOs, acting as the security custodian in this endeavor, can make various contributions, specifically in dealing with the religious violence along Europe's immediate borders. DSOs should first and foremost develop a better understanding of the phenomenon: speak the language, grasp the culture, comprehend the power dynamics, understand the strategy, and keep a finger on the pulse of religious polarization. They can discredit and dissuade, by puncturing the narrative, while respecting the religion. They can mobilize moderation by boosting the resilience of religious communities. They can degrade and deny their ability to operate conventionally (find-fix-strike), disrupt supply lines and close off exit routes if and only if religious groups possess substantial (conventional) military capabilities. They can build and train local and regional security forces that are capable, reliable and seen as legitimate by the people they are supposed to protect. They can separate groups and protect buffers and barriers to preclude contact between the groups. They can disarm, demobilize and reintegrate (DDR) the (tens of thousands of) fighters to support the post stabilization and normalization process. And they can foster partnerships with state and non-state actors to build societal resilience against religious extremism.

This is about persuasion rather than coercion, and about collaboration rather than control. The sustainability of such long-term efforts should be a central element in their design.

## **2.4 EBOLA AND EPIDEMICS**

Our contribution to this year's Strategic Monitor also includes the report *Epidemics and Strategic Timing* that focused on pestilence in the form of the Ebola virus. Even in just the last century, there have been instances in which pandemics took the lives of millions of people, such as the almost 40 million people who died from HIV/AIDS, the 20 million who died from the Spanish flu and the millions who died from various other forms of the flu.

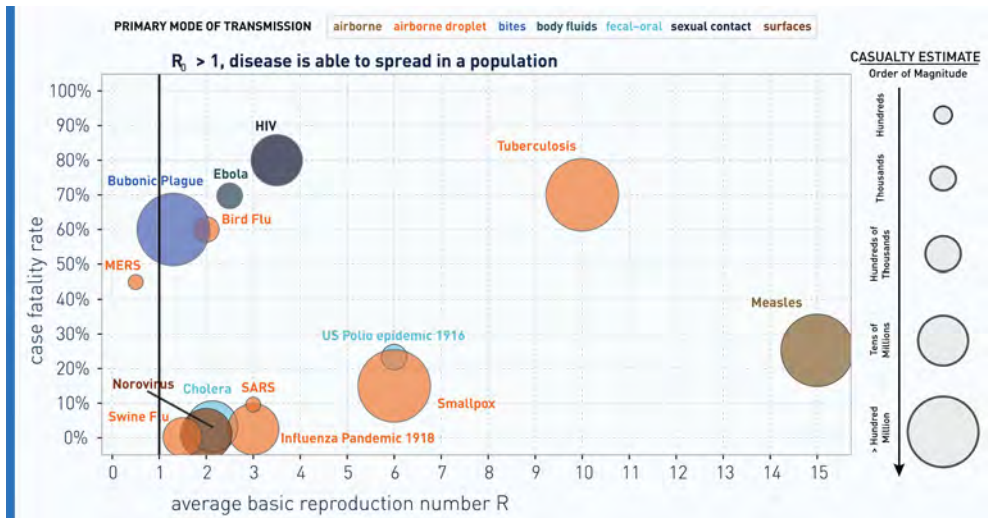


FIGURE 5. DIFFERENT EPIDEMIC DISEASES COMPARED BY REPRODUCTION NUMBER, CASE FATALITY RATE, AND NUMBER OF CASUALTIES.<sup>18</sup>

In 2014, the Ebola virus claimed thousands of victims in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Its sheer magnitude overwhelmed national health care systems and paralyzed affected societies for extended periods of time. The outbreak prompted numerous governments to implement countermeasures in order to prevent the Ebola virus from spreading further. Like in the cases of SARS and the avian flu, the Ebola disease did not turn out to be the catastrophic pandemic that many of the initial projections said it would be. It did yield a number of important lessons for the appropriate type of intervention capabilities and strategies to deal with such contingencies, and for the role of DSOs in future interventions.

We conducted an analysis making use of quantitative system dynamics modeling. Both timing and scaling turned out to be quintessential components of an international intervention, yielding a number of important recommendations. The development and deployment of intervention capabilities should be proactive, anticipating both the doubling time of the

<sup>18</sup> Figure adapted from David McCandless, “The MicrobeScope - Infectious Diseases in Context,” *Information Is Beautiful*, October 2014, <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/the-microscope/>.

disease and the delay of building up additional intervention capabilities. Even at the risk of ringing a false alarm, the deployment of intervention capabilities should take place as early as possible in the initial exponential phase of the epidemic. If direct disease control fails, late intervention might require additional non-medical intervention measures too. As a rule, international medical interventions are supported by non-medical methods, such as protective measures, coordination services and logistics. Typically, DSOs play an active role in delivering such support. DSOs, in their role as international disaster responders, must be prepared to move in rapidly once it becomes clear that the existing intervention capacity is insufficient. Also if DSOs are not in the lead, they should be part of the anticipation and preparation phase. During actual deployment they may have to be called upon to provide logistical assistance and support to public authorities to maintain stability and public order.

By framing our annual report around the theme ‘ghosts from the past’ that we might have hoped were gone forever, we were looking to capture people’s imagination. The factual elements in the narrative behind the return of these old challenges, often in new manifestations, are incontestably real. Every single one of them represents a formidable challenge to our DSOs, requiring thoughtful analysis and serious attention. And yet we feel that we would be remiss in our monitoring responsibilities if we were to restrict ourselves to this single narrative. Most organizations, including DSOs, are not blind to these tip-of-the-iceberg events. They are already actively involved in many of them. The problem is that this focus on the more dominant visible developments often blindsides organizations to various other – possibly less reported, but equally perceptible – developments. “For this reason, we highlight in our report this particular ghost story in a broader context. The next section will describe some broader trends in global violence. The subsequent section will then try to establish a more balanced assessment of the both conflictual and cooperative sides of the international security coin. We will wrap this report up with some conclusions.

# 3 TRENDS IN VIOLENCE

## 3.1 AN OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL VIOLENCE

Last year saw massive violence in places as far flung as Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, wreaking havoc and destruction on fragile host societies. Some argue that these conflicts are only temporary setbacks in the proliferation of peace. Others take them to be the midwives of a renewed era of war.

The Long Peace and the New Peace have recently become relatively well established both in the scholarly and the popular literature.<sup>19</sup> Proponents of the peace thesis assert that the world has never been as peaceful as it is at present. The chances of dying a violent death are at an all time low. Traditional interstate war has become a relatively rare phenomenon since the end of the Second World War. There has been an ‘obsolescence’ of great power war since the 1953 Korean War. And intrastate or societal conflict has decreased significantly since the end of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup> (See Figure 6)

The long term decline of conflict, they argue, is not a mere coincidence but is the effect of long term structural changes in the political, economic and cultural make-up of our societies.

---

19 Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011).

20 See also John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (Basic Books, 1989); Joshua S Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Plume, 2012); Ian Morris, *War! What Is It Good for? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014); Human Security Report Project, *Human Security Report 2013: The Decline in Global Violence : Evidence, Explanation, and Contestation*. (Vancouver: Human Security Press, 2014).



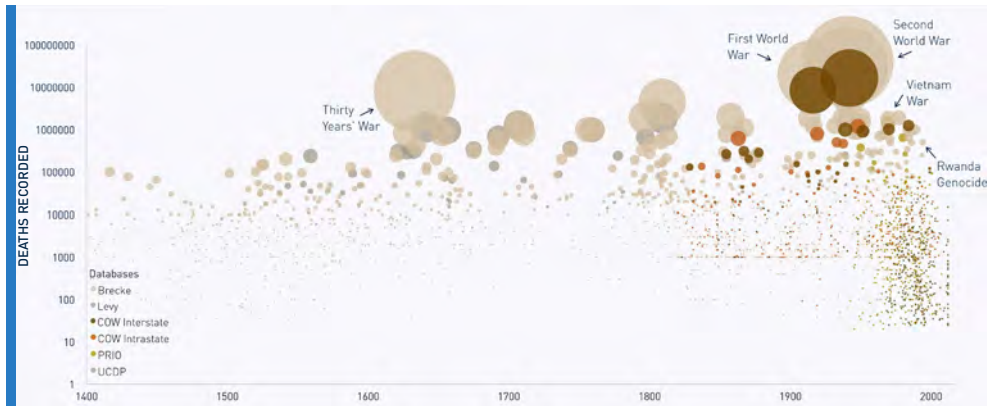


FIGURE 6. CONFLICT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: 1400-PRESENT.<sup>21</sup>

Overall global fragility of states has declined over the past two decades as measured by the State Fragility Index (SFI) and their resilience has increased.<sup>22</sup> The long-term outlooks for the further decline of societal conflict are good. One team of Norwegian researchers estimates that “the global incidence of [societal] conflict is likely to continue to decrease from the current level, and probably be reduced to about two thirds the number of conflicts in 2048” due to projected reductions in poverty and increases in societal resilience worldwide, even if “the incidence of major conflicts (more than 1000 battle-related deaths per year) will remain stable”.<sup>23</sup>

Opponents of the peace thesis reject the notion that the world is becoming more peaceful. They point towards the continuing prevalence of conflict and accuse others of being fooled by randomness, of naivety about human’s innate violent tendencies, of ignorance about the effects of the anarchic structure of the international system and the rise of revisionist powers, or of simply missing

21 Tim Sweijts and Joshua Polchar, “Peace and Conflict Across Time” (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, January 20, 2014).

22 Of 163 countries included in the SFI 117 experienced a decline in state fragility since 1995, with 78 of these countries showing a strong decline in state fragility. 28 countries show roughly no change from 1995-2013, with 9 of these countries experiencing some of the highest levels of state security and lack of fragility. 18 countries of the analysis have shown an increase in state fragility since 1995. Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility* (Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, July 23, 2014).

23 Havard Hegre et al., *Predicting Armed Conflict, 2010-2050* (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), July 11, 2009), 2, 30, 34.

other factors that account for decline in violent deaths.<sup>24</sup> Even if they acknowledge a temporary lull, they consider recent spikes of violence in various conflict hot spots as harbingers of a reverse in the passing downward trend.

### 3.2 TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

A closer look at various measurements of violence across time reveals that, even if – as of yet – there is no dramatic change in levels of violence at the global level, its downward trend certainly is stalling. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the overall magnitude of political violence decreased for over a decade. The overall magnitude is measured by a combination of the number of conflicts and the magnitude of each single conflict based on their “comprehensive effects on the state or states directly affected by the warfare, including numbers of combatants and casualties, affected area, dislocated population, and extent of infrastructure damage.”<sup>25</sup> Both interstate and societal conflict declined notably through the 1990s and into the 2000s, resulting in a 60% decline from peak levels (see Figure 7). But since 2003, following the invasion of Iraq and the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan, the decline in societal conflict has stalled.

---

24 Nassim Nicholas Taleb, “The ‘Long Peace’ Is a Statistical Illusion,” accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.fooledbyrandomness.com/longpeace.pdf>; John Gray, “John Gray: Steven Pinker Is Wrong about Violence and War,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/13/john-gray-steven-pinker-wrong-violence-war-declining>; Walter Russell Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141211/walter-russell-mead/the-return-of-geopolitics>; Tanisha Fazal, “Dead Wrong?: Battle Deaths, Military Medicine, and Exaggerated Reports of War’s Demise,” *International Security* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 95–125.

25 Conflicts with over 500 directly related fatalities are included. The magnitude of a “major episode of political violence” is assessed on a ten-point scale on the basis of “its comprehensive effects on the state or states directly affected by the warfare, including numbers of combatants and casualties, affected area, dislocated population, and extent of infrastructure damage.” Monty G. Marshall, “CSP - Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2013,” *Center for Systemic Peace*, March 2014, 12, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist.htm>; “Assessing the Societal and Systemic Impact of Warfare: Coding Guidelines,” *Center for Systemic Peace*, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warcode.htm>.

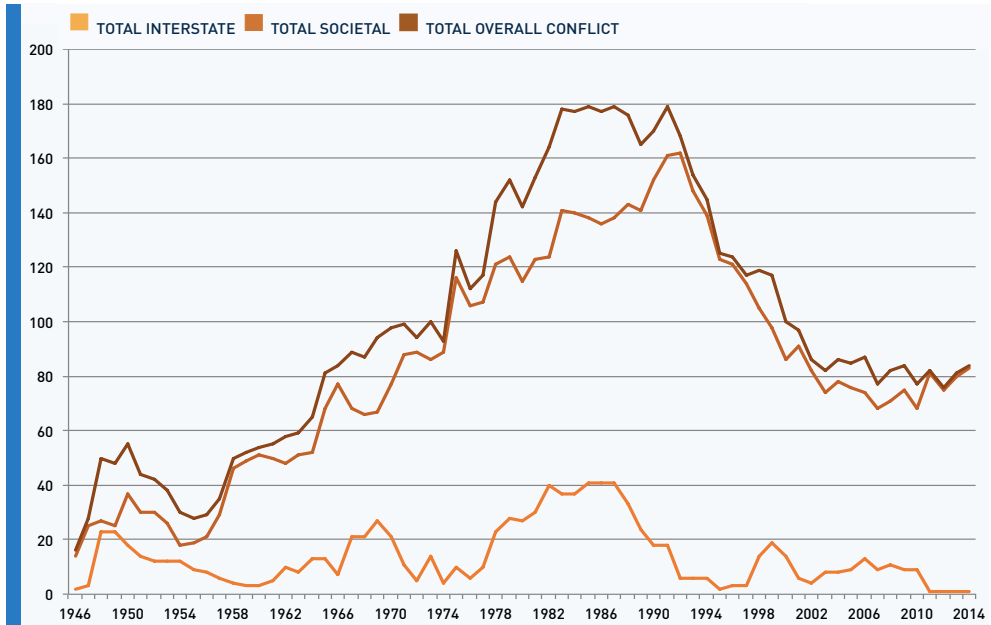


FIGURE 7. TOTAL MAGNITUDES OF INTERSTATE AND SOCIETAL CONFLICT 1946-2014.<sup>26</sup>

Over the last decade, the total magnitude of conflict has hovered between 76 and 87, with the number of conflicts remaining between 24 and 27 (see Figure 8). Since 2004, just 1-4 conflicts each year were interstate conflicts.<sup>27</sup> Since 2011, all conflicts except one have been societal conflicts (the annexation of Crimea and the standoff between Russia and the West in 2014 did not feature as an interstate conflict because it did not exceed the threshold of 500 fatalities). The initially declining trend in societal conflict shifted in 2011, increasing from a magnitude of 61 to 72 when instability engulfed Arab nations following the Arab Spring. From 2013 to 2014, the total magnitude of conflict (both interstate and societal) rose from 80 units to 83 units, and the number of conflicts increased from 24 societal and 1 interstate conflict in 2013 to 26 societal and 1 interstate conflict in 2014. While the magnitude of all pre-existing conflicts remained the same from 2013 to 2014, the development of conflicts in Ukraine and Libya were responsible for this rise, with magnitudes of 2 and 1 respectively.<sup>28</sup>

26 Based on Major Episodes of Armed Violence data in Marshall, "CSP - Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2013."

27 This average is pulled by 4 interstate conflicts out of 27 in 2006, and 4 out of 25 in 2008.

28 Conflicts in which foreign actors are involved but which are not fought directly between two governments are classified as societal conflicts. Examples of such conflicts include Syria, Iraq and Ukraine.

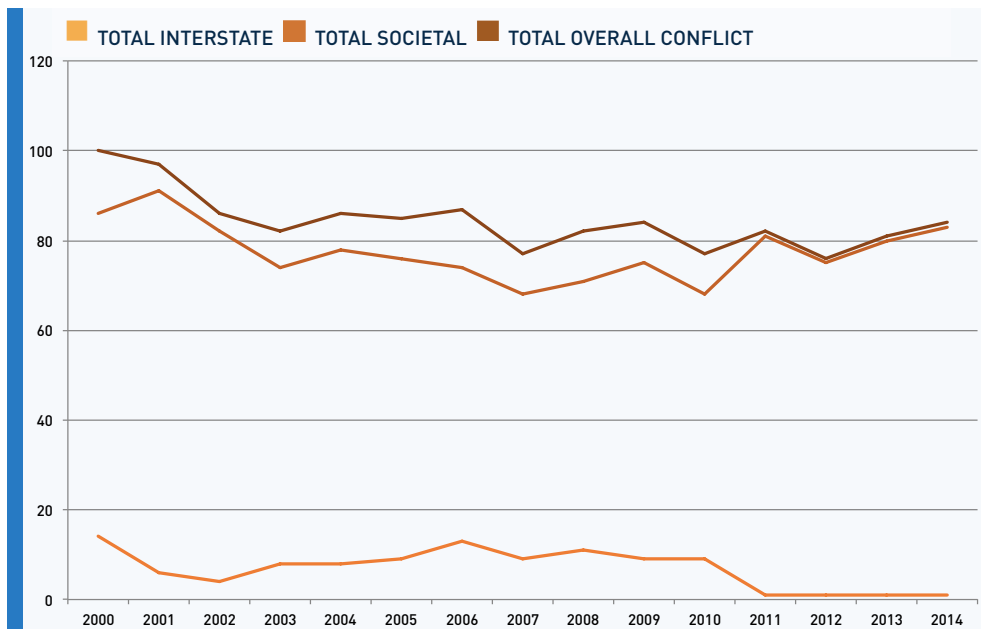


FIGURE 8. TOTAL MAGNITUDES OF INTERSTATE AND SOCIETAL CONFLICT SINCE 2000.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3 VIOLENT DEATHS

The number of annual battle deaths according to the UCDP is lower than at its peak levels in 1990 and 1999, but has seen an increase over the past decade (see Figure 9).<sup>30</sup>

29 Based on Major Episodes of Armed Violence data in Marshall, “CSP - Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2013.”

30 Battle-related deaths refer to “those deaths caused by the warring parties that can be directly related to combat... This includes traditional battlefield fighting, guerrilla activities... and all kinds of bombardments of military bases, cities and villages... The target for the attacks is either the military forces or representatives for the parties, though there is often substantial collateral damage in the form of civilians being killed in the crossfire, indiscriminate bombings, etc.” See Pettersson, “UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset Codebook (Version 5.0-2014).” Additionally, battle deaths are distinct from war-related deaths, which includes both direct and indirect deaths (due to criminality, starvation, disease, or attacks only directed against civilians). UCDP PRIO advises that for its conflicts coders “the general rule for counting battle-related deaths is moderation”. It counts battle deaths of conflicts if they exceed the threshold of 25 per calendar year. See “Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP): Definitions,” *Uppsala University - Department of Peace and Conflict Research*, 2015.

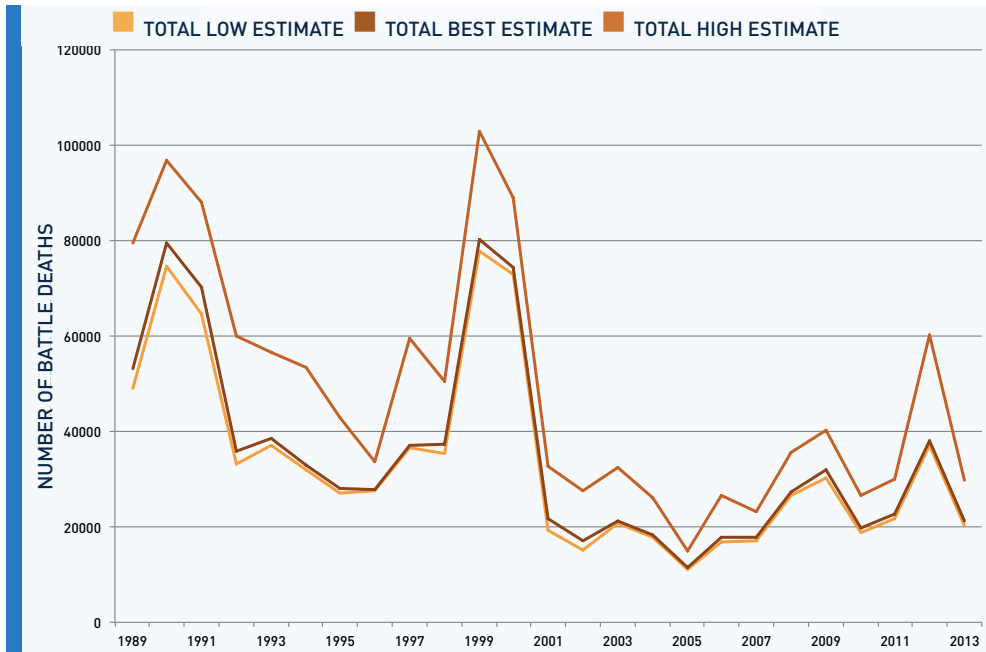


FIGURE 9. NUMBER OF BATTLE-RELATED DEATHS, 1989-2013.<sup>31</sup>

Using best estimate figures, 2008 and 2009 saw moderate spikes with 27,296 and 31,872 battle deaths respectively and a larger spike in 2012 when 37,992 people died on the battlefield. The 2008 spike was primarily due to conflicts in Sri Lanka (8,243), Afghanistan and Pakistan (4,561), Pakistan (2,997), Iraq (2,090), Somalia (1,499). For 2009, in particular Sri Lanka (10,165), Afghanistan (5,231), Pakistan (4,999), Congo (1,824), and Iraq (1,036) contributed to the spike. The sudden spike in 2012 was predominantly caused by the conflict in Syria, which, under best UCDP estimates, accounted for 14,828 of the total battle deaths. 2012’s other deadliest conflicts in terms of battle deaths included Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya-Somalia, and Yemen.

If we consider fatalities due to violence in conflicts both on and outside of the battlefield, the picture looks considerably worse. The organization PS21 calculates a total death count of 163,562 for 2014, which is a 28% increase from 2013.<sup>32</sup>

31 Pettersson, “UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset Codebook (Version 5.0-2014).”

32 PS21 does not offer a strict definition of war fatalities. It compiles its numbers on death counts from multiple sources, including journalist reports, humanitarian and NGO groups, and regional conflict data sources including ACLED and the South Asia Terrorism Portal. Consistency in numbers compiled is maintained for each country.

Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan have remained the deadliest wars from 2013 to 2014, with all three having seen a spike in fatalities. The conflict in Syria is responsible for the overwhelming majority of deadly conflicts. For 2014, the death toll in Syria was 76,021, accounting for 46% of deaths of the top 20 deadliest conflicts. The top 4 major conflicts accounted for 75% of all deaths for 2014's 20 deadliest conflicts, which next to Syria include Iraq (21,073), Afghanistan (14,638), and Nigeria (11,529). Based on this broader notion of fatalities, 2014 also saw an increase in the number of conflicts that killed more than 1000 people, rising from ten conflicts in 2013 to fourteen in 2014.<sup>33</sup> In 2014, these fourteen conflicts with more than 1000 deaths included in addition to Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria, South Sudan (6,389), Pakistan (5,496), Sudan (5,335), Ukraine (4,707), Somalia (4,447), Central African Republic (3,347), Libya (2,825), Israel/Palestine (2,365), Yemen (1,500), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,235). Conflicts that increased above the 1000 deaths threshold for 2014 included Israel/Palestine, Ukraine, Libya, and Yemen.

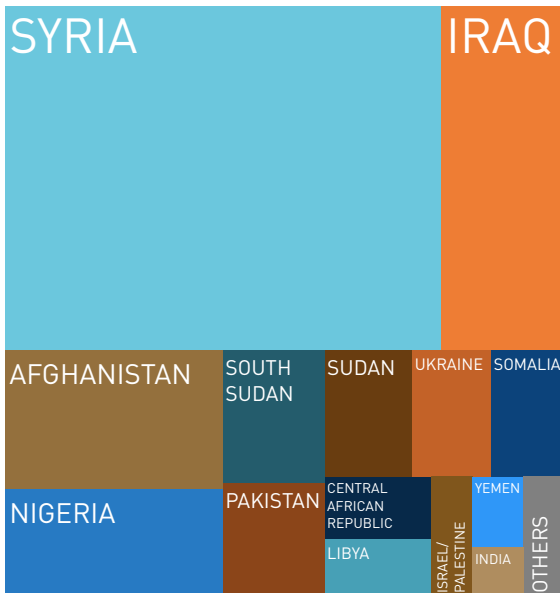


FIGURE 10. FATALITIES OF TOP 20 DEADLIEST CONFLICTS FOR 2014.<sup>34</sup>

33 See Alexander Mattes, “Death Toll in 2014’s Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year” (Project for the Study of the 21st Century (PS21), 2015).

34 PS21, “Death Toll in 2014’s Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year,” *PS21*, March 17, 2015, <http://projects21.com/2015/03/17/death-toll-in-2014s-bloodiest-wars-sharply-up-on-previous-year/>.

### 3.4 HIGH CASUALTY TERRORIST BOMBINGS

The number of high casualty (15 casualties or more) terrorist bombings are also up dramatically, increasing from 370 casualty deaths in 2000 to 3,527 in 2001, and 5,276 in 2007 (see Figure 11). In the last five years, casualties from terrorist bombings have peaked at 4,175 deaths in 2013. Today, 85% of all terrorist activity takes place in 11 countries.<sup>35</sup> Another figure indicates that in 2013 over 80% of the lives lost to terrorist activity occurred in just 5 countries, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> Radical Islamist groups, specifically Islamic State, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and various Al Qaeda franchises perpetrate many of the most violent acts.<sup>37</sup> The dramatic increase in high casualty terrorist bombings since 2001 is almost entirely due to Islamic extremists.<sup>38</sup> Extremist and militant conflict activities have been concentrating in the center of the Arab Middle East and the central interior of Africa, with particular surges in Syria-Iraq and Nigeria.<sup>39</sup> High casualty terrorist bombings have been increasingly concentrated in regions of majority Muslim countries, and local Muslim populations have felt the majority of casualties resulting from terrorist bombings.<sup>40</sup> Over a decade after the attacks in London and Madrid, and four years after the Norway killings, a handful of lethal attacks took place on European soil over the past year, including most poignantly the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris of January 2015. None of these incidents exceeded the fifteen casualties threshold.<sup>41</sup>

---

35 Marshall and Cole, *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*, 15.

36 *Global Terrorism Index 2014: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2014), 2. "Global Terrorism Index, 2014."

37 PS21, "Death Toll in 2014's Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year."

38 Sweijs, Ginn, and De Spiegeleire, "Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence."

39 Marshall and Cole, *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*, 15.

40 Ibid.

41 Not included is the violence in Ukraine.

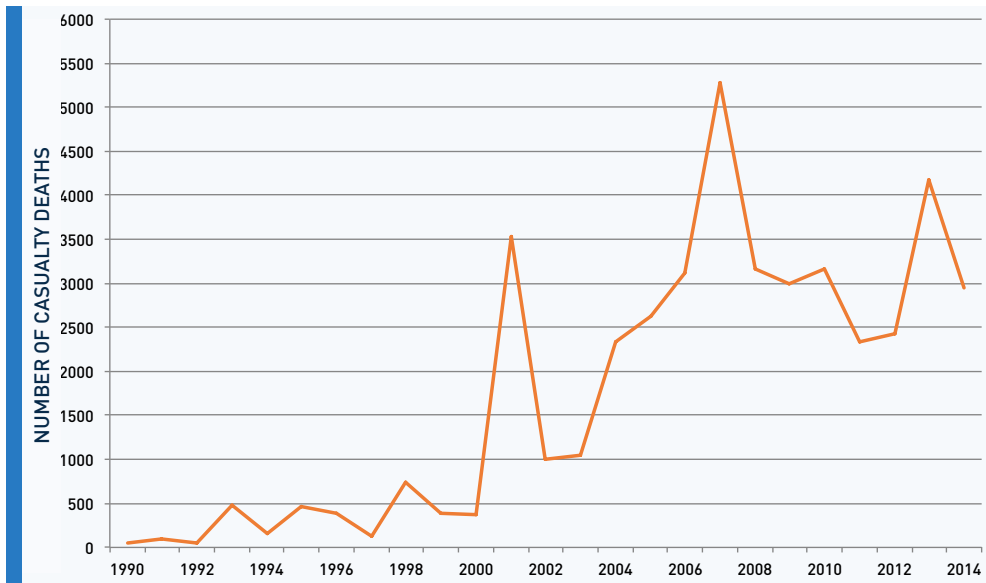


FIGURE 11. TOTAL HIGH CASUALTY TERRORIST BOMBINGS, 1990-2014.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.5 CONFLICT HOT SPOTS

Even if global levels of violence have not fluctuated dramatically, there are various conflict hot spots around the world that primarily concern societal conflicts, some of which involve foreign actors. These include Central Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Central African Republic), the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Kenya), West Africa (Nigeria and Mali), South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India), and North Africa and the Middle East (Libya, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Yemen) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine). In addition, persistent low-level violence plagues societies in Central and Latin America (Colombia and Mexico) and South East Asia (Myanmar and the Philippines). Tensions in the South China Sea Region between China and regional countries, as well as friction on the Korean peninsula, continue to simmer beneath and sometimes above the surface, and pose a real threat to regional security. So do the tensions between ‘the West’ and Russia, which emerge over countries caught in overlapping spheres of influence.<sup>43</sup>

42 Monty G. Marshall, “High Casualty Terrorist Bombings (HCTB): September 11, 1989–March 10, 2014” (Center for Systemic Peace, 2014), <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/HCTBMar2014list.pdf>.

43 Tim Sweijs et al., *Why Are Pivot States So Pivotal? The Role of Pivot States In Regional and Global Security*. (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2014).



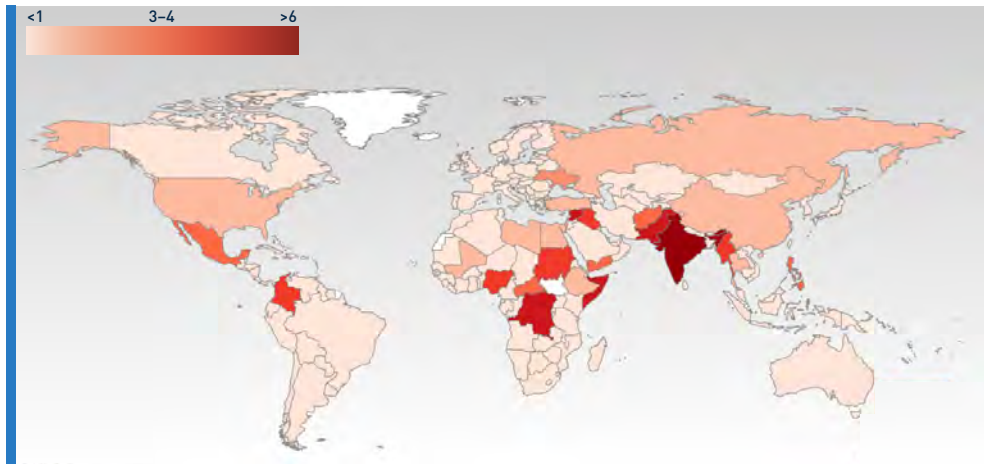


FIGURE 12. OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL VIOLENCE, 2014.<sup>44</sup>

One conspicuous trend of recent years is the *contagion* and *spill-over* of many of the contemporary conflicts in the Sahel region, in the Middle East, Northern Africa and in Southwest Asia in particular.<sup>45</sup> As a general rule, civil conflict in adjacent countries increases the risk of civil conflict for neighbors.<sup>46</sup> In the Arab world, the revolutionary fervor proved to be contagious. Internal armed conflicts blossomed in the power vacuums in the wake of revolutions – Libya, Iraq, Syria and Yemen – worsened by the meddling of external actors. These conflicts spilled over beyond national borders. Ethnic and religious kinship serve as one

44 Major Episodes of Armed Violence based on data provided by Dr Monty Marshall of the Center for Systemic Peace. See Marshall, “CSP - Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2013.”

45 Conflict contagion occurs when an internal conflict in one location alters the probability of another internal conflict erupting in another location (Erika Forsberg, “Transnational Transmitters: Ethnic Kinship Ties and Conflict Contagion 1946-2009,” *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations* 40, no. 2 (2014): 144). Contagion is linked to the onset of conflict in neighboring countries, with new actors that may feel a kinship to the original conflict actors. Spillover is more related to the overflow of a conflict across borders, perhaps due to the growth of the same single group or expansion of ethnic/territorial conflict. For instance, if a conflict has origins in Country A, spillover is when Country A’s conflict grows and expands into Country B’s territory, and contagion is when Country B experiences conflict development due to the local observance of conflict causes/goals in Country A.

46 Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Transnational Dimensions of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 3 (May 2007): 294. Even if some find that in the post Second World War period many civil conflicts did not spill over into neighboring countries. Black for instance notes that from 1946-2007 out of 616 cases of spatially and temporally clustered conflicts only 122 involved sub-state conflict contagion (See Nathan Black, “When Have Violence Civil Conflicts Spread? Introducing a Dataset of Substate Conflict Contagion,” *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 6 (November 2013): 752).

of the conflict transmission mechanisms,<sup>47</sup> but porous borders facilitate the spread of violence through the uninhibited movement of fighters and goods. Arms – both small and large – become more accessible and less costly to aggrieved groups.<sup>48</sup> Some of these zones of anarchy have evolved into regional distribution hubs. Libya is a case in point.<sup>49</sup> A particular risk for the next coming years is these conflict zones conjoining. The declared allegiance of Boko Haram to IS - for whatever it was worth at the moment it was declared - is a worrisome sign. With continuing instability or weak and ineffective governments in Chad, the Central African Republic, the Sudans, Libya and Egypt, the conflict in Nigeria is now threatening to cleave from West Africa through Central Africa to East Africa and the Middle East.

Another striking trend is the *fusion* of various types of conflict. Transnational armed movements interfere in internal armed conflicts, thereby transforming not only local conflict dynamics, but also redefining the scope and the character of the conflict. In a similar vein, the involvement of foreign states turns previously localized internal armed conflicts into murky multilayered conflicts – which are not easily classified using existing nomenclature. The conflict in Syria, for instance, is not one conflict but spans many. It may have started out as an internal armed conflict between Assad’s regime and opposition groups (which quickly grew in number, now estimated by the UCDP to be up to 1,200).<sup>50</sup> From it evolved an internal armed conflict between numerous armed opposition groups in Syria in which IS, originating in Iraq, appeared as the dominant actor. Meanwhile IS attracted over 20,000 foreign fighters from over 80 countries to join its ranks.<sup>51</sup> This transnational movement is now waging a war both in Syria and Iraq and beyond. The conflict is further fuelled on by the sunni-shiite schism that threatens to tear the region apart with Saudi Arabia on one side and

---

47 Forsberg, “Transnational Transmitters: Ethnic Kinship Ties and Conflict Contagion 1946-2009,” 143.

48 Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford University Press* 56, no. 4 (October 2004): 563–95.

49 See John Lee Anderson, “The Unravelling,” *The New Yorker*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/unravelling>; *Libya: Getting Geneva Right*, Middle East and North Africa Report (Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 26, 2015).

50 “Complexities of Coding Syria” (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014), <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/info/Complexities%20of%20coding%20Syria.pdf>.UCDP.

51 Gene Thorp and Swati Sharma, “Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria,” *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2015/01/27/7fa56b70-a631-11e4-a7c2-03d37af98440\\_graphic.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2015/01/27/7fa56b70-a631-11e4-a7c2-03d37af98440_graphic.html).

Iran on the other. Finally, it transformed into an internationalized internal armed conflict when the US assembled an international coalition to fight IS in Iraq and Syria.

But the fusion of conflicts is not only taking place in the Levant. The internal armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine is also an internationalized internal armed conflict as a result of Russia's (unacknowledged) interference. It is at risk of evolving into an interstate armed conflict between NATO Member states and Russia. In such contexts it becomes hard to identify not only the enemy but also the type of conflict DSOs are engaged in.

Conflict actors are using new but also old instruments to attain strategic objectives. The borders of the Middle East are sometimes, in a very literal sense, bulldozed away by a rag-tag coalition of religious extremists from across the globe operating under the wings of IS.<sup>52</sup> IS' rise is as astonishing as it is illustrative of how networked adversaries cooperate in fluid alliances to achieve their ends. For such adversaries it is hard and perhaps impossible to define a strategic center of gravity. DSOs, by their own admission, find that traditional campaign strategies are not very effective here. As Maj. Gen. Michael K. Nagata, commander of American Special Operations forces in the Middle East, observed in comments related to IS in late December 2014, "We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it. [...] We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea."<sup>53</sup>

But the challenge presents itself also on other fronts in different incarnations. The *Blitzanschluss* of the Crimea did not involve fighter jets or tanks, nor shooting or shelling, and there certainly was no declaration of war. The campaign was executed by 'local self defense forces' supported by Russian troops wearing unmarked uniforms. Their official involvement was continuously denied in a carefully orchestrated strategic battle for the narrative. Strategists and practitioners in the West are now pondering how to react and respond in

---

52 *Bulldozing the Border Between Iraq and Syria: The Islamic State (Part 5)*, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxX\\_THjtXOw&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxX_THjtXOw&feature=youtube_gdata_player).

53 See Eric Schmitt, "In Battle to Defang ISIS, U.S. Targets Its Psychology," *The New York Times*, December 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html>.

the face of what is popularly called hybrid warfare. East-West relations meanwhile have reached an all time low since the end of the Cold War.

### 3.6 VIOLENCE OUTLOOK

Trotsky's famous adage that *even if you may not be interested in war, war is certainly interested in you* has an ominous ring of truth to many Europeans who thought they left the horrors of war behind. The ongoing violence in Eastern Europe and the MENA region may indicate that the 'remnants of war' are greater than perhaps anticipated.<sup>54</sup> But even if the downward trajectory of global violence has been stalling, violence levels have certainly not reached the historically high levels of the past. The absence of great power war is partially to thank for this.<sup>55</sup> Still, various forms of violence in a number of conflict zones in the Middle East, and different parts of Africa cause considerable numbers of war fatalities. Many of these zones are stuck in a conflict spiral that it is hard to break out of. Even if a cease-fire is established, close to half of post-conflict states relapse into war within a decade.<sup>56</sup> The legacy of conflict leaves behind not only fighters and stocks of arms but also organizational structures that render societies vulnerable to the renewed outbreak of conflict.<sup>57</sup> For the foreseeable future, the merger of different conflict zones through the spillover and contagion of conflicts is a particular risk to global and regional security. The fusion of different conflicts is another risk. For Europeans in particular a transnational terrorist movement that merges local and global grievances poses a continuing internal threat to the physical security of its citizens and the political stability of its societies. The escalation of internal armed conflicts into internationalized interstate conflicts is a clear and present danger on Europe's eastern periphery. It is to be hoped that the nuclear threshold will continue to serve as a deterrent against any forceful changes in the status quo, and not as a backup shield that gives more risk-prone actors license to experiment with various types of salami-

---

54 John E. Mueller, *The Remnants of War*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

55 Jay Ulfelder, "A Note on Trends in Armed Conflict," *Dart-Throwing Chimp*, March 27, 2015, <https://dartthrowingchimp.wordpress.com/2015/03/27/a-note-on-trends-in-armed-conflict/>.

56 Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 4 (July 2008): 461; Jeffrey Dixon, "What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating Quantitative Research Findings," *International Studies Review* 11, no. 4 (December 2009): 717; Havard Hegre et al., "Predicting Armed Conflict 2010-2050," *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2013): 253.

57 Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, Working Paper Series (Center for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), March 13, 2002), 10.

tactics.<sup>58</sup> But if one thing is clear, it is that conflict actors will deploy both old and new instruments to attain their strategic objectives. The world may not have yet entered a renewed era of war, but the New Peace, at least for the moment, has ceased to proliferate further.

---

58 Recurrent talk of 'the nuclear option' in recent months amongst Russian senior political and military leadership is a cause for concern. For an overview, see The Editorial Board, "President Vladimir Putin's Dangerous Moves," *The New York Times*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/16/opinion/president-vladimir-putins-dangerous-moves.html>. For salami tactics, see Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale Paperbound (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), 66–69.

# 4 BEYOND VIOLENCE: INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN PERSPECTIVE

The strategic orientation efforts of our DSOs should not only try to provide decision-makers with early warning about the various things that are or might be going wrong in this world's security situation. They should also carefully monitor (in both meanings of that word, all developments that are or could be making the world safer from a security point of view. Unfortunately, we are, for the time being, still stuck with a fairly crude set of measurements of the 'bad' side of the lever, as most data-sets tend to focus on conflict. In all of its contributions to the Strategic Monitor over the years, HCSS has strived for a more balanced approach. We remind our readers that the Dutch government's Strategic Monitor effort evolved out of the 2010 Future Policy Survey ('Strategische Verkenningen. Houvast voor de Toekomst Van de Krijgsmacht'). This report, which included a wide-ranging security foresight section, singled out two dimensions of the security futurespace for special attention: 1) whether states would remain in the driver seat of the international system or would be increasingly overtaken by non-state actors; and 2) whether dominant actors would be more likely to cooperative or conflictual, whomever the dominant actors may be.

In our past contributions to the Strategic Monitor, HCSS has developed and refined different ways to track movements along this 2-dimensional futurespace – i.e., also in its 'cooperative' half. In our 2013 contribution, we came to the conclusion that state actors had been trying to reclaim a dominant role in the international system. We also put this against a longer-term countervailing trend of the growing ascendancy of non-state actors – international organizations, NGOs, multinationals, terrorist groups and others – in international affairs. Last year, in a few different studies, we pointed out that

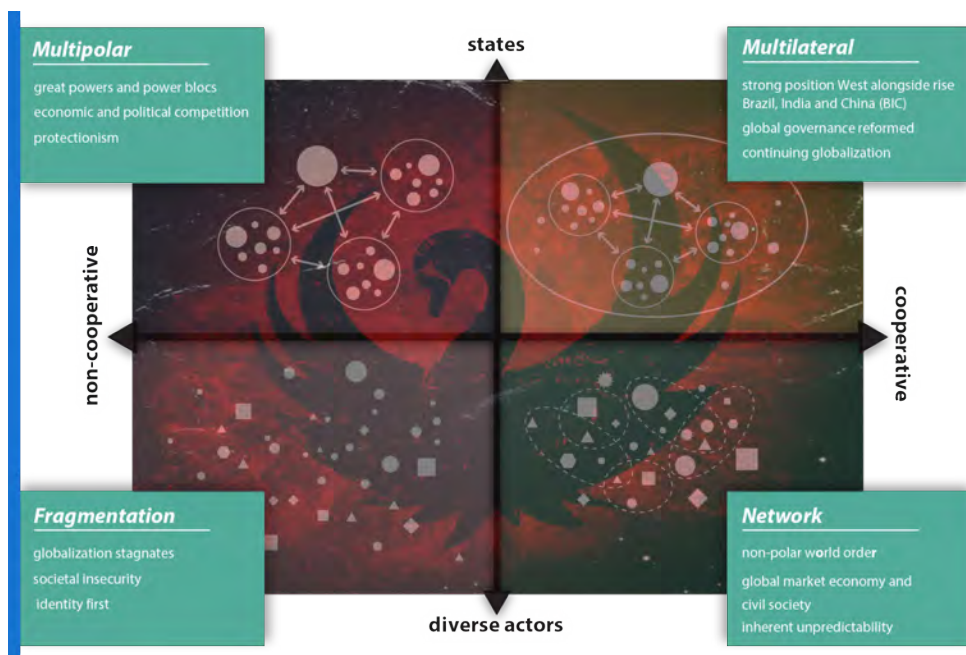


FIGURE 13. SCENARIO MATRIX OF THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT'S 2010 FUTURE POLICY SURVEY.

there are some problems with this 2x2 matrix (as there are with any of these types of 2x2 matrices).<sup>59</sup> In our study about great power assertiveness,<sup>60</sup> we showed that at least the two great powers that were examined (China and Russia) engage in quite a bit of bi- and multilateral cooperation as well as conflict – often at the same time. And in our study about state and non-state actors,<sup>61</sup> we found that the terms ‘state actors’ and ‘non-state actors’ are more ambivalent than they may seem at first sight and are not a ‘zero-sum game’ proposition – in fact we found evidence of growing power for both sides.

We have always cautioned against taking the Future Policy Scenario framework as the “end-all and be-all” of our national security foresight efforts. The framework represents only two dimensions of an actual futurespace that is

59 Joris Van Esch et al., *Strategic Monitor 2014: Four Strategic Challenges* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014), 207–209.

60 De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases*.

61 Peter Wijninga et al., “State and Non-State Actors: Beyond the Dichotomy,” in *Strategic Monitor 2014: Four Strategic Challenges* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014).

indubitably much more daunting in its complexity and multi-dimensionality. Nevertheless, we still feel these two dimensions, as messy and limited as they may be, still represent two crucially important aspects of the international security system. In our quest for a more balanced monitoring method, we have also kept looking for better ways to capture both sides of the ledger.

This year, we are in a position to present some more systematic and more granular longer-term data for both of these axes based on the Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT).<sup>62</sup> In this chapter we will take a look at what has happened to conflict and cooperation at the ‘event’-level since 1979; what role state- *and* non-state actors have played in both sides of this coin; whether we see any differences between different types of cooperation or conflict; how this story played itself out geographically in 2014; and finally what role the Netherlands has played in all of this.

---

62 For background see “The GDELT Project,” accessed April 28, 2015, <http://gdeltproject.org/>. We are acutely aware of the many weaknesses and problems surrounding coded event data in general and GDELT in specific. For further elaboration, see *Designing New Policy Options for Dealing with a New Russia* (forthcoming) This is precisely why in our Great Power Assertiveness study we last year also compared our GDELT findings with those of a few other datasets that we collected. It is also why we now are putting significant effort in exploring the two other datasets that are now available - both Phoenix and ICEWS. Unfortunately, Phoenix has not yet completed its historical dataset, and ICEWS published its dataset on the Harvard dataverse only in late March 2015. We advise our readers, however, to keep following our web-based platform HCSS StratMon on which we will soon start publishing regular updates from the various datasets and -tools that we have developed for the Strategic Monitor. As to GDELT, we feel that the various techniques we have used to minimize GDELT’s well-known weakness (especially our normalization efforts) make its use quite defensible.



## 4.1 CONFLICT AND COOPERATION SINCE 1979

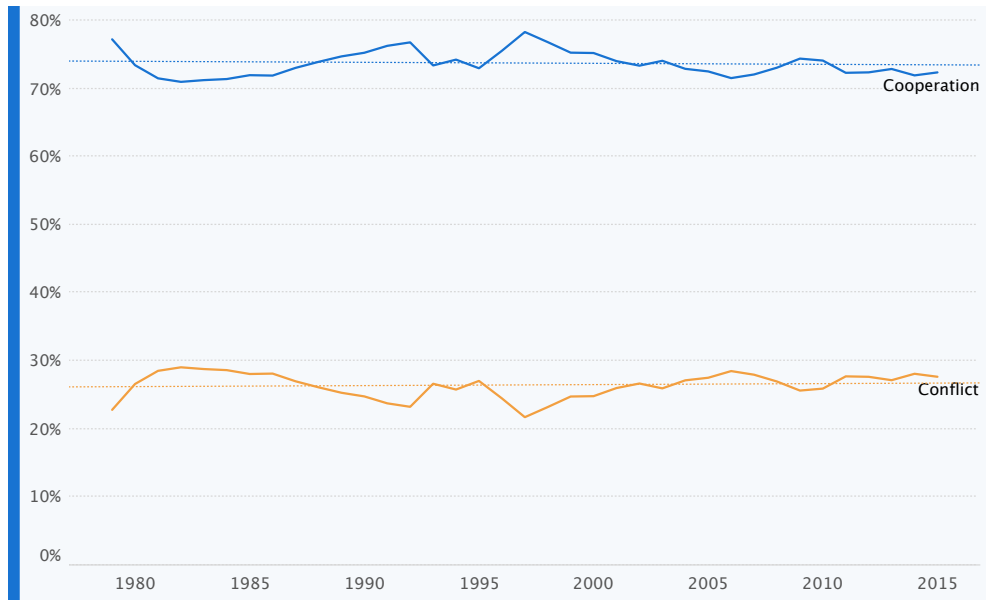


FIGURE 14. CONFLICT AND COOPERATION SINCE 1979.

Figure 14 shows the relative<sup>63</sup> amount of GDELT events since 1979 that were coded as ‘conflict’ versus those that were coded as ‘cooperation’ (based on the CAMEO quad classes<sup>64</sup>). These deceptively simple line graphs actually visualize about 300 million international events that were automatically coded from millions of (admittedly only English-language) newspaper articles from across the globe.

These data suggest a number of striking observations. The first one is that most foreign and security analysts (and – therefore – also the global public) may very well underestimate the amount of global cooperation that occurs in the world. It is often remarked that newspapers have a (commercially-driven) bias towards sensational reporting, and that they therefore tend to over-report ‘negative’

63 We essentially first summed all events that were coded as either ‘cooperative’ or ‘conflictual’ for each country, and then normalized those by calculating what percentage they represented of the overall amount of coded events.

64 The entire CAMEO event taxonomy is aggregated into four primary classifications: Verbal Cooperation, Material Cooperation, Verbal Conflict, and Material Conflict. These are called ‘quad classes’ in GDELT, and the following figures are visual representations of them.

events and underreport ‘positive’ ones.<sup>65</sup> These data do not permit us to address this debate since we have no idea what the relation is between reported and not-reported events in GDELT. But even if such a negative bias were to exist – which we think plausible –, it is all the more striking that the overwhelming majority of events (80%) remain cooperative.

A second observation from Figure 14 is that – again contrary to popular perception – there appears to be no clear upwards or downwards trend in either conflict or cooperation. In the previous section of this report, we noted the decline in various types of conflict as evidenced in the ‘peak’ events of physical conflicts with a certain level of human loss of life. These more general data suggest that there seems to be a certain constant amount ‘churn’ of conflict and cooperation that shows no dramatic ups or downs over these past 50 years. Humans’ and organizations’ remarkably persistent heuristic bias towards what we call ‘presentism’ (the tendency to focus on what is going on at this moment and to lose historical perspective) and ‘recentism’ (the tendency to focus on events that have just recently occurred – and especially on those that were personally experienced) have been widely documented in the psychological and social psychological literature.<sup>66</sup> Most Europeans, when asked, would probably state that there has been a lot more conflict in recent years because of developments like IS, Crimea, jihadist global attacks etc. And yet these GDELT figures do not support such intuition, particularly not for the past few years.

#### 4.2 STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS

GDELT also allows us an opportunity to explore the breakdown of these figures between events that have states as actors and events that have non-states as actors – the other axis of the scenario framework of the 2010 Future Policy Survey. We caution the reader not to read too much into the absolute numbers that are shown here. We are still refining the algorithm that we use to isolate the state and non-state actors from the event data. Nevertheless, having

---

65 Gunther Lengauer, Frank Esser, and Rosa Berganza, “Negativity in Political News: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings,” *Journalism*, no. Special Issue (2011); Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, “The Structure of Foreign News,” *Journal of Peace Research* 2, no. 1 (March 1965): 64–90.

66 For a general overview see Thomas Gilovich, Dale W. Griffin, and Daniel Kahneman, eds., *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

experimented with multiple ways of doing so, we were struck by the robustness of some of the relative trends, which is why we decided to present them.<sup>67</sup>

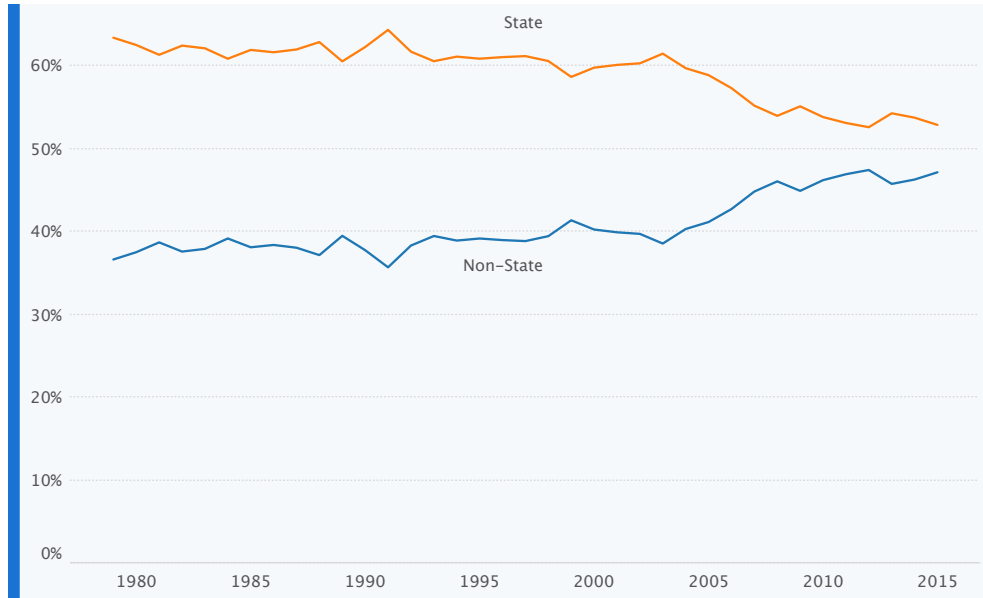


FIGURE 15. STATE VS NON-STATE ACTORS.

Figure 15 shows the fairly stable increase in the relative importance of non-state actors since the beginning of this millennium. We see a ‘double dip’ in this broader trend that is temporally remarkably well aligned with the double dip in the world economy (2008-2009 and 2013-14). But the growing ascendancy of non-state actors seems to persist.

67 The particular logic that was used to create the following figures is that for any event that has an identified source country (not all do) for which the subtypes are not identifiable non-state actors, it is labeled as a state-event. For example, all events that contain an actor code UKR (for Ukraine) and do not contain sub-codes like REB (for rebel) or REF for refugees are counted as ‘state’-events. All other events are counted as events by non-state actors. HCSS has also experimented with other logics, and those data are available upon request.

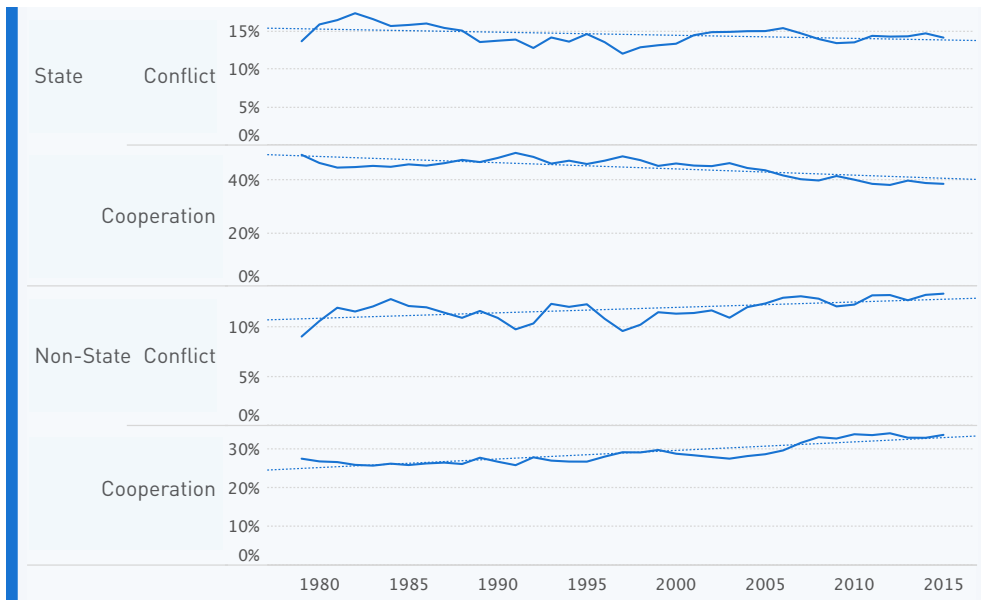


FIGURE 16. STATE VS. NON-STATE CONFLICT AND COOPERATION.

If we then look at the breakdown of conflict and cooperation by states or non-states (Figure 16), we again observe some interesting trends. We notice that non-state actors engage in more than twice as many cooperative events than they do in conflictual ones. We also see that both types of actors have been cooperating ever more intensively – and also more steadily – than they have been engaged in conflict. That preponderance of cooperation over conflict is even more accentuated for state actors, although we see that in their case the gap is declining somewhat because cooperation is declining more than conflict is. The final interesting observation that we take away from Figure 16 is the slow, gradual nature of the change in all of these line graphs over time. We observe some more volatility over time for conflict than for cooperation, but overall these trends appear to be remarkably robust.

### 4.3 TYPES OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

What happens when we delve a bit deeper in these events to take a look at different *types* of cooperation? GDELT’s event coder categorizes all events into 4 different categories, which it calls ‘quad classes’: Verbal Cooperation, Material Cooperation, Verbal Conflict, and Material Conflict. Figure 17 displays the trends for these 4 classes since 1979. We note that *verbal cooperation* remains

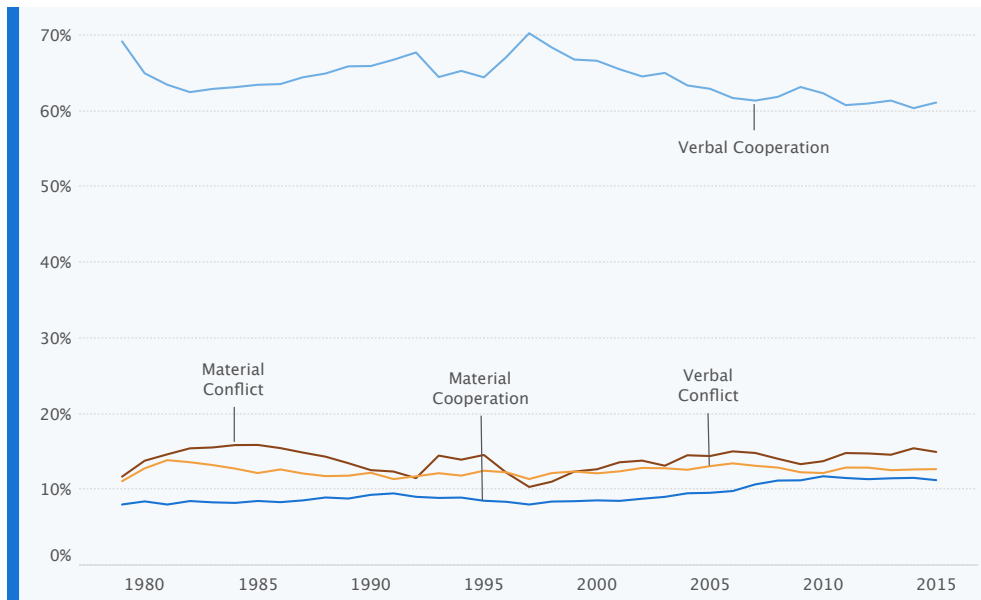


FIGURE 17. CONFLICT AND COOPERATION TYPES SINCE 1979.

– by far – the most dominant type of international event, even though we also see that the relative amount of verbal cooperation has declined quite significantly from its peak in 1997, where it represented over 70% of all events, to a little over 60% in early 2015. So (‘nice’) talk may be cheap, but even that cheap talk seems to be on its way down. And when we look at actions (actual *material cooperation*) instead of just words, we see that this category has consistently been the smallest of all 4 categories, even if it has been inching upwards from about 8% of all events in 1979 to about 11% in 2015.

*Verbal conflict* appears to stay quite steady over time at about 12% of all events, but *material conflict* is slightly more ‘edgy’, with a few peaks in the mid-80s and the mid-90s. Since 2005, it seems to oscillate somewhat more steadily around (a historically still relatively high) 14-15%.

#### 4.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES IN CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

So far we have analyzed the big trends in conflictual and cooperative events over the past half a century at the global level. What do these data look at country-level? The following figures just show the findings for the entire year 2014. GDELT automatically extracts event-related ‘triplets’ (*who did what to whom*)

from newspaper articles. Every action (‘event’) is also coded based on whether it is a verbal or material action; and whether it is a cooperative or a conflictual action. In this section, we will present a few relevant maps from all of the maps we generated on cooperation and conflict in the international system.

For the following map (Figure 18), we started by calculating, for every country, what percentage of all events in which they were the source actor was of a cooperative nature. The most cooperative countries, for instance, were small countries like Andorra, Macao or Tuvalu with over 90% cooperative events; and also larger countries like Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Belarus. In Africa, Angola and Gabon jump out as highly cooperative countries; in Latin America – which, like Europe is mostly blue colored – Suriname and Uruguay. The most conflictual countries in 2014 were countries like Yemen, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Israel. If we look at some of the great powers, we see that Brazil leads that group with 81% cooperative events, followed by China (77%), the US (72%), Russia (70%) and – maybe surprisingly – India as the least cooperative great power (67%).<sup>68</sup>

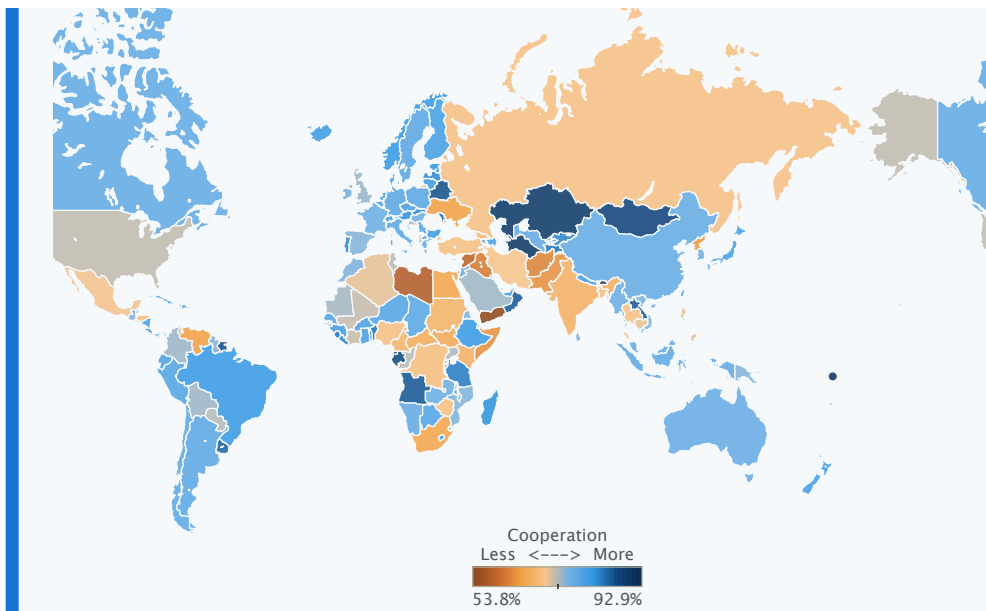


FIGURE 18. SOURCE ACTORS: PERCENTAGE OF COOPERATIVE EVENTS (WORLD).

68 We only include in this list the world’s single remaining superpower (the US) and the countries that are often mentioned as potential contenders. This is why we excluded the EU and Japan.

If we take a closer look at Europe in this map (Figure 19), we are struck by the overwhelming blue color that also shows remarkably small differences. Western and Central Europe appears from these data as the most uniformly cooperative region. The European top-cooperators are (besides Belarus (86%) and Moldova (84%)) Slovakia and Portugal (both 82.5%) and Norway (81.4). On the bottom we find Spain (75), Great Britain (74) and Croatia (73).

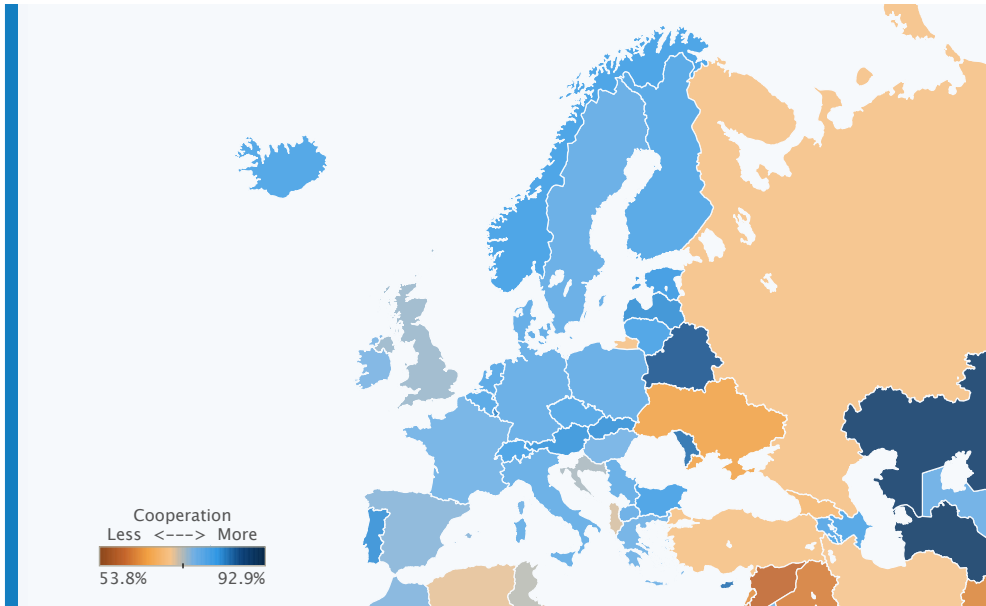


FIGURE 19. SOURCE ACTORS: PERCENTAGE OF COOPERATIVE EVENTS (EUROPE).

The following two maps show the degree to which each country has been the target of conflictual events or the beneficiary of cooperative ones. Globally, we once again see the very small countries leading the ranking with countries like Macao, São Tomé and Príncipe, or the Seychelles. It would be fascinating to explore whether the entire GDELT data-set confirms the hypothesis that is sometimes expressed in the international relations literature that small countries truly are different from larger ones. Of the more discernable countries on the map, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Gabon are the biggest recipients of cooperation. On the bottom of the rankings, we find the same countries that provide less cooperation (see previous maps) also receiving less of it. Here again Yemen, Libya and Syria jump out – and surprisingly also Georgia. The ranking of the great powers here is almost the same as in the

previous map – only Russia and India switch their penultimate and last positions. It is also interesting to note that Russia and the US are the only two great powers that receive fewer cooperative events than they provide.

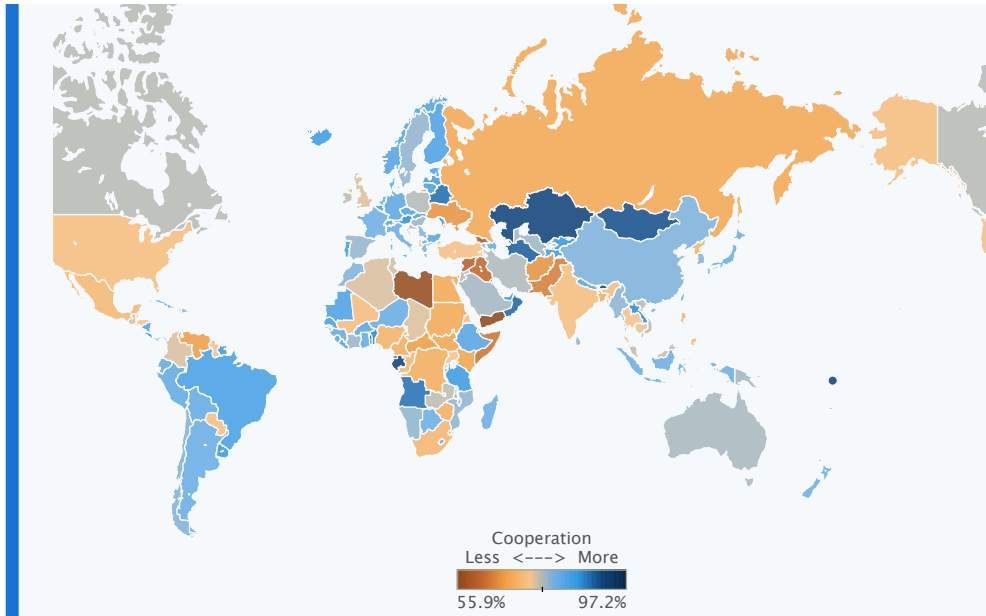


FIGURE 20. TARGET ACTORS: PERCENTAGE OF COOPERATIVE EVENTS (WORLD).

When we look at European countries as the *recipients* of cooperation, the picture looks a little bit less rosy than when we looked at them as *providers* of cooperation. Latin America clearly does better here than Europe. Within Europe we again see the outliers of Belarus (88%) and Moldova (84%). Here we see countries like Austria (85.8%), Portugal (84.1%) and Latvia (84%) on top and countries like Great Britain (74%), Albania (73%), Poland (76%), Croatia (76%) and Hungary (77%).

The final geographical analysis we provide filters out the verbal events and focuses only on factual events. As we already noted that verbal cooperative events are the (overwhelmingly) single largest group of events, we suspected the picture would look different from the previous ones. It does. We immediately observe that the blue color – i.e. countries that engage in more cooperative than conflictual events – almost disappears. The negativity bias in the media that we talked about in the first section of this chapter may certainly play a role in this.



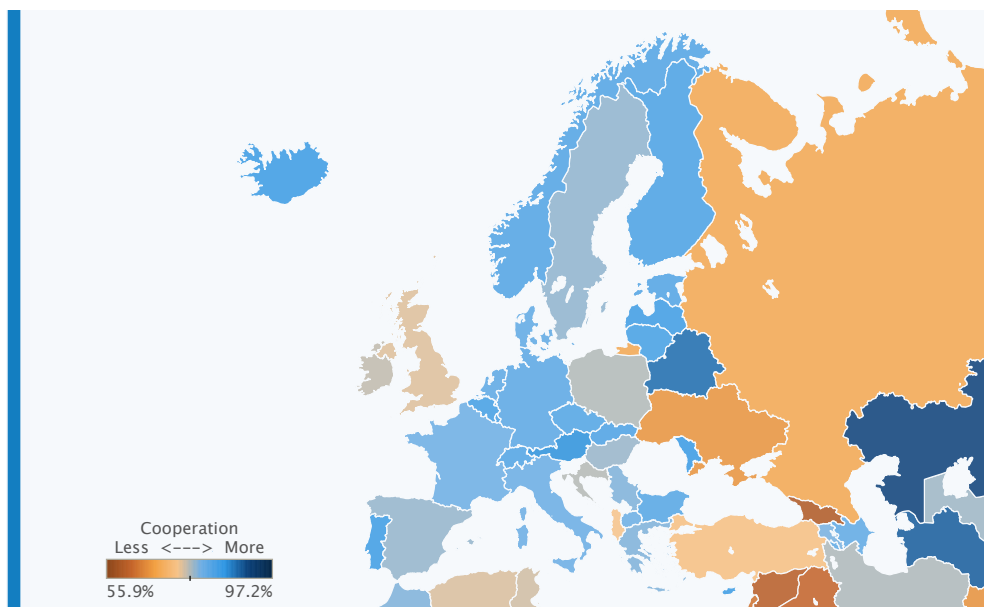


FIGURE 21. TARGET ACTORS: PERCENTAGE OF COOPERATIVE EVENTS (EUROPE).

The most factually cooperative countries are once again the smaller ones (Hong Kong as the top one, followed by countries like Tuvalu, São Tomé and Príncipe, Uruguay, Luxembourg, Mauritius, etc.). Of the bigger countries, we see Finland, Portugal, Kazakhstan, Norway and Uruguay as the most (relatively) cooperative ones. The Netherlands, like most of its other Western Europe neighbors is in the lightest possible shades of red with 52% of cooperative events. So whereas (Western and Central) Europe engages in its fair share of negative events, it is internationally speaking still one of the more cooperative regions

The other end of the scale is dominated by countries that are actively involved in ongoing conflicts: Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Israel, Libya, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Honduras (the little mediatized Aguán conflict), Iraq and Egypt. Two of the great powers – Brazil (58%) and China (53%) behave in more factual cooperative events than in factual conflictual ones. For the other three it is the other way around: the US has 46% of factual cooperative events, Russia – somewhat surprisingly, also given its decidedly more malevolent ranking in some of the other maps – only 41% and India 40%. We suspect that India's low scores in some of these datasets are related to internal, rather than external conflict – which is something we are not able to filter out very well yet.

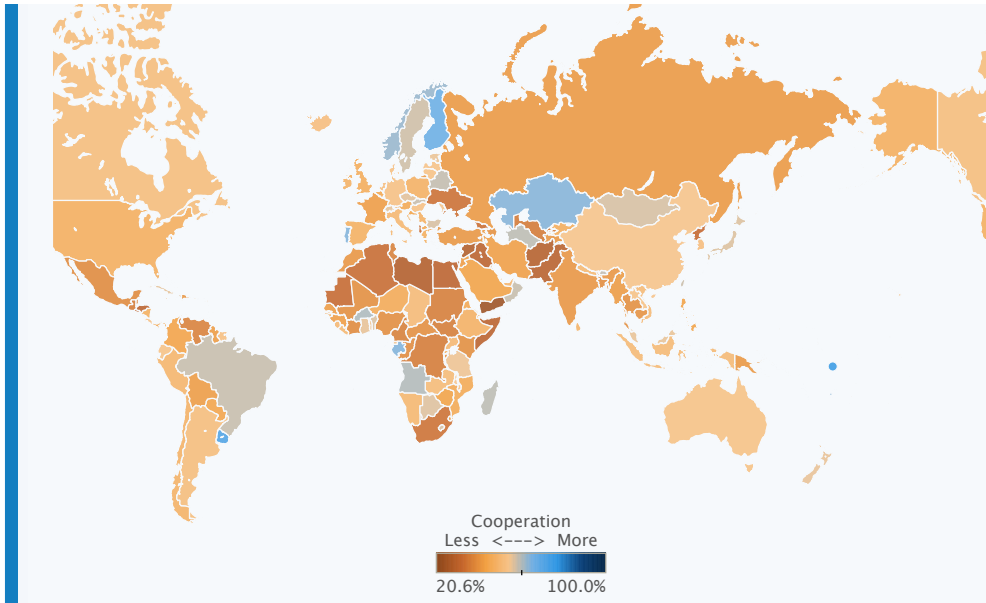


FIGURE 22. SOURCES OF MATERIAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION.

#### 4.5 THE NETHERLANDS IN THE WORLD

This year we are also in a position to present specific GDELT data for specific countries. We can therefore, for the first time, take a closer look at what these event data tell us about the Netherlands itself.

In Figure 23 we see the amount of events that all countries in the world have ‘targeted’ at the Netherlands in 2014. This confirms the general notion that the Netherlands is in the overall enviable position of being the target of a very low number of conflictual events of either a verbal or a material nature. We also clearly see the outpouring of international (verbal) support for the Netherlands in the week of July 17 when MH17 was downed. That week also shows – much smaller – peaks in all other categories. Finally, we also clearly discern the Nuclear Security Summit that took place in The Hague as another peak in the verbal cooperation’ category on the bottom left in the week of 24-25 March.

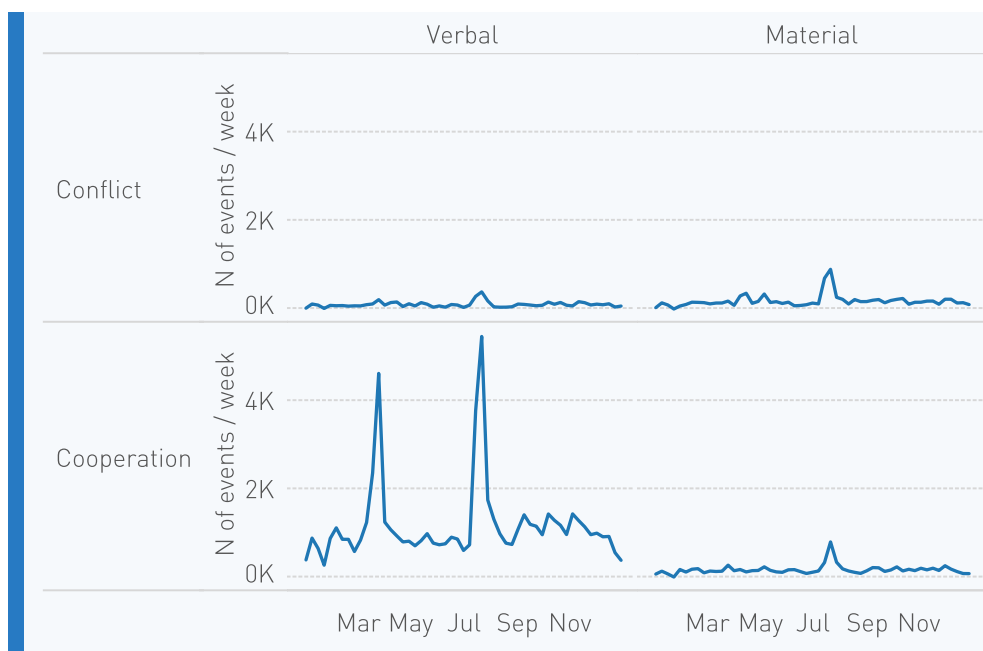


FIGURE 23. TYPES OF ACTIONS TARGETING THE NETHERLANDS.

We can now also present these data geographically and show which countries targeted or were targeted by the Netherlands.<sup>69</sup> This is the focus of the next two visuals.

Figure 24 shows the countries towards which the Netherlands engaged in assertive events in 2014. We note that the Netherlands maintained a highly positive attitude towards its European neighbors, with a few exceptions such as Serbia (1.9%<sup>70</sup>), Hungary (6.45%), Iceland (9.68%), Bulgaria (12.9%) and – somewhat surprisingly<sup>71</sup> – Austria (14.8%).

69 For this section, we add HCSS recoding of the original CAMEO codes into assertiveness codes. The main reason is that this allows us to differentiate not only between verbal/material and more assertive towards the Netherlands in 2014, as well as the countries towards which the Netherlands has been more assertive. See De Spiegeleire et al., *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases*.

70 These percentages represent the percentiles of the balance between positive and negative assertive events. So for each country, we first calculated by which number the count of positive events for this country exceed count of negative events. In this particular case, a country that would have a 100% ‘positivity’ score would be a country towards which the Netherlands would only have initiated positive events and not a single negative one. Based on those positivity scores for each country, we then calculated the percentile that figure represented in the positivity scores for all countries. The figure of 1.9% here for Serbia therefore means that only 1.9% of countries have received a lower positivity score than Serbia.

71 A closer look at the data reveals that this is due to the very low number of dyadic events between the two countries: there were only 6 of them, 3 of which were ‘Accuse, not specified below’, 2 were ‘Reject plan, agreement to settle dispute’, and 1 was ‘Criticize or denounce’.

On the global arena, Table 1 presents the bottom 15 countries. That Russia and Ukraine top this list this year should come as no great surprise given the war that broke out there and given the countries' respective (and different) roles in the MH17 disaster. Below these two we find a number of other countries at war where one or more of the conflicting parties are seen by the Netherlands as threats to regional, European or global security (Syria, Libya, Sudan, Iran; Egypt, PRC, Colombia, North Korea); and a number of countries in the EEA that regularly spar with the Netherlands over various economic (Iceland) or political (Hungary, Serbia) issues. The high scores for Morocco and Moldova may be a bit more surprising, although somewhat less so in the first case when one thinks about the various bilateral issues that bedevil Dutch-Moroccan relations. We have no immediate explanation for the low score of Moldova.

TARGET COUNTRY	PERCENTILE OF POSITIVITY SCORE
Russia	0.65%
Ukraine	1.29%
Serbia	1.94%
Syria	2.58%
Morocco	3.23%
Moldova	4.52%
Libya	4.52%
Sudan	6.45%
Iran	6.45%
Hungary	6.45%
Egypt	7.10%
People's Republic of the Congo	7.74%
North Korea	9.03%
Colombia	9.03%
Iceland	9.68%

TABLE 1.

On the top of the list, we find the following 15 countries towards which the Netherlands has behaved assertively in a positive sense. The high positions of Malaysia and Australia in this table are most likely related to the intense cooperation on the handling of the MH17 catastrophe that also received much attention and coverage in the international press in that period. The high scores of the ‘G2’ and of many of the Netherlands’ European neighbors reflect some more ‘structural’ ties that bind these countries together. The presence of Saudi Arabia in this list comes as somewhat of a surprise and would probably benefit from a more in-depth analysis.

TARGET COUNTRY	PERCENTILE OF POSITIVITY SCORE
Malaysia	99.35%
United States	98.71%
China	97.42%
United Kingdom	96.77%
Australia	96.13%
France	95.48%
Germany	94.84%
Belgium	94.19%
Europe	93.55%
Spain	92.90%
Greece	92.26%
Saudi Arabia	91.61%
Japan	90.97%
Italy	90.32%

TABLE 2.

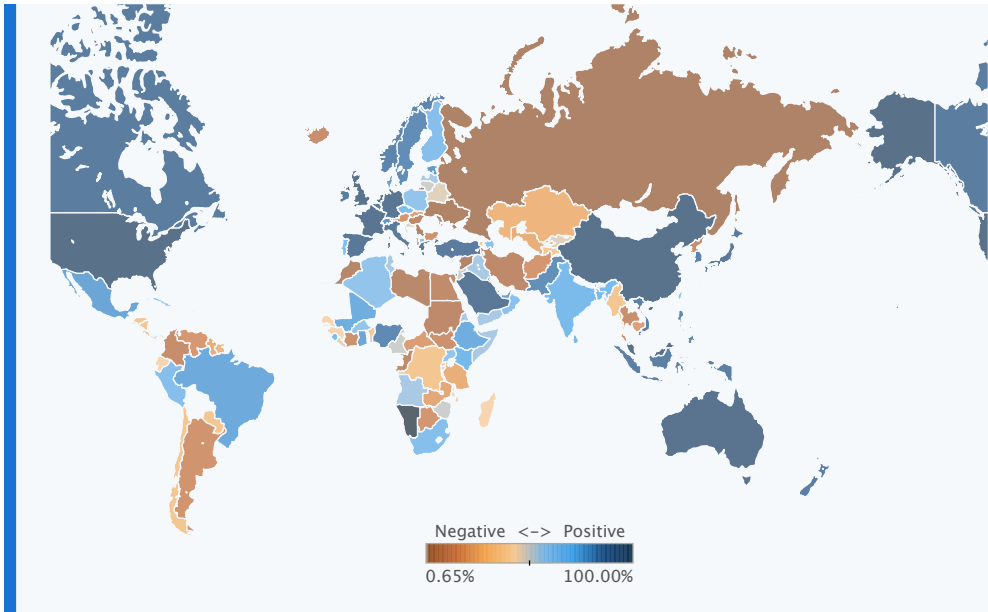


FIGURE 24. TARGETS OF THE NETHERLANDS' ASSERTIVENESS IN 2014 (WORLD).

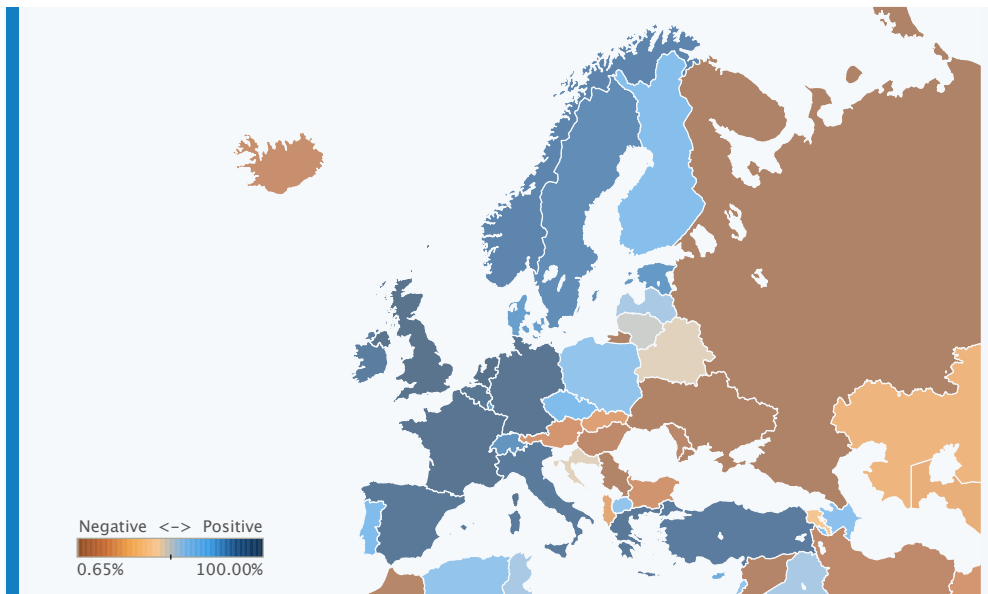


FIGURE 25. TARGETS OF THE NETHERLANDS' ASSERTIVENESS IN 2014 (EUROPE).

The next two figures and tables show the reverse of the previous ones: they represent the countries that have targeted the Netherlands assertively in 2014.

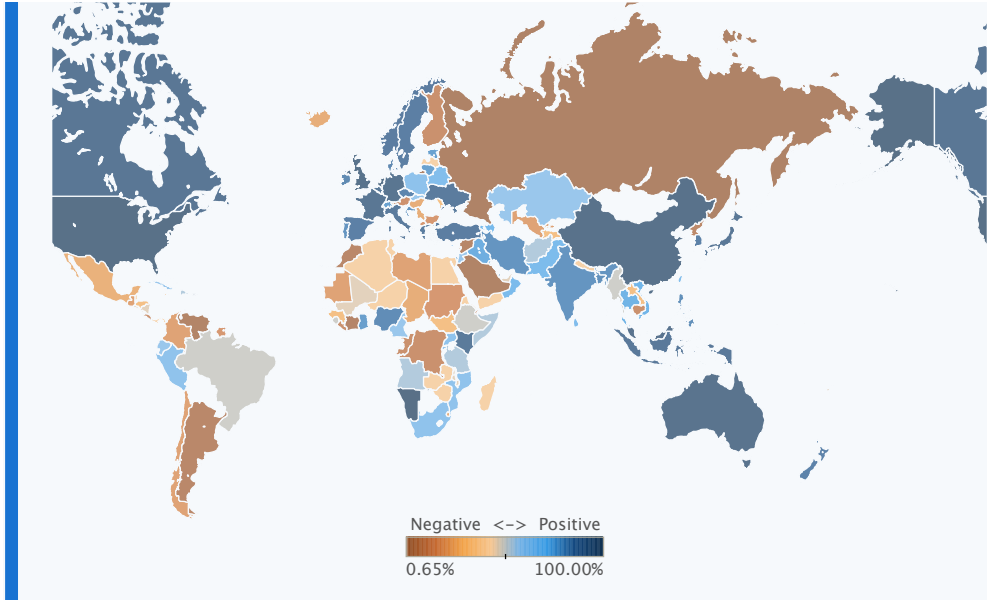


FIGURE 26. OTHER COUNTRIES' ASSERTIVENESS TOWARDS THE NETHERLANDS IN 2014 (WORLD).

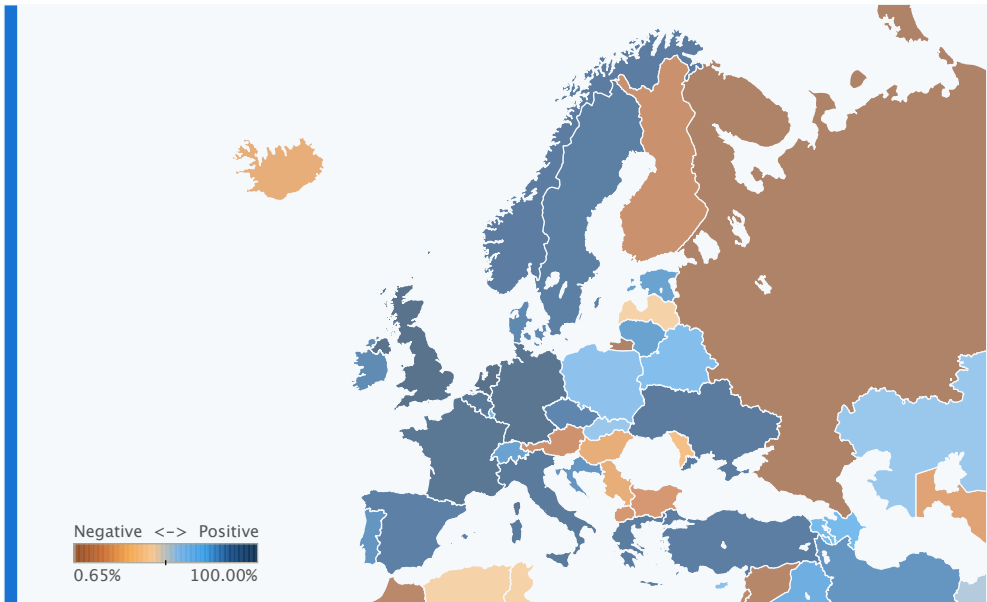


FIGURE 27. OTHER COUNTRIES' ASSERTIVENESS TOWARDS THE NETHERLANDS IN 2014 (EUROPE).

The list of the countries that targeted the Netherlands most negatively in 2014 contains a number of fairly obvious candidates. The combination of MH17 (especially the subsequent and still ongoing investigation), the (mutual) sanctions, and the Netherlands' liberal profile that is often targeted in the Russian press, certainly explain Russia's leading position. The appearance of the Kingdom's largest neighbor in the Caribbean, Venezuela, is also no great surprise given that country's regime's strongly assertive stance vis-à-vis the Netherlands and the United States in the Caribbean. But many names on this list cannot be so easily explained - like Saudi Arabia or Ivory Coast. We suspect that this might be a consequence of the fairly low numbers of dyadic events between the countries that may artificially inflate the importance of one or two – less widely known – negative events.

SOURCE COUNTRY	PERCENTILE OF POSITIVITY SCORE
Russia	0.65%
Saudi Arabia	1.30%
Venezuela	1.95%
Ivory Coast	2.60%
Syria	3.25%
Argentina	4.55%
Morocco	4.55%
Lebanon	5.84%
North Korea	5.84%
Malta	6.49%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	11.04%
People's Republic of the Congo	11.04%
Costa Rica	11.04%
Finland	11.04%
Cambodia	11.04%

TABLE 3.



On the other ‘positive’ side of this same list we find the following 15 countries. This list contains far fewer prima facie surprises. We now see the G-2 on top, with a surprisingly small difference between them. It is certainly comforting to see that these two leading countries in the world’s pegging order engage in such an overwhelming preponderance of positive events towards the Netherlands. Beyond the G-2, we see a fairly similar mix to what we saw with respect to the target countries: Holland’s neighbors, its other major trading partners (Canada, Japan), and its MH17-co-victims (Malaysia, Australia). The fact that its former colony Indonesia also had such a (surprisingly) highly positive attitude towards the Netherlands in 2014 might be a special source of pride. It would be interesting to examine in these new event datasets how this dyadic relationship developed over the past few decades.

SOURCE COUNTRY	PERCENTILE OF POSITIVITY SCORE
United States	99.35%
China	98.05%
United Kingdom	97.40%
Australia	96.75%
Malaysia	96.10%
Germany	95.45%
Europe	95.45%
France	94.16%
Canada	93.51%
Japan	92.86%
Belgium	92.21%
Indonesia	91.56%
Kenya	90.91%

TABLE 4.

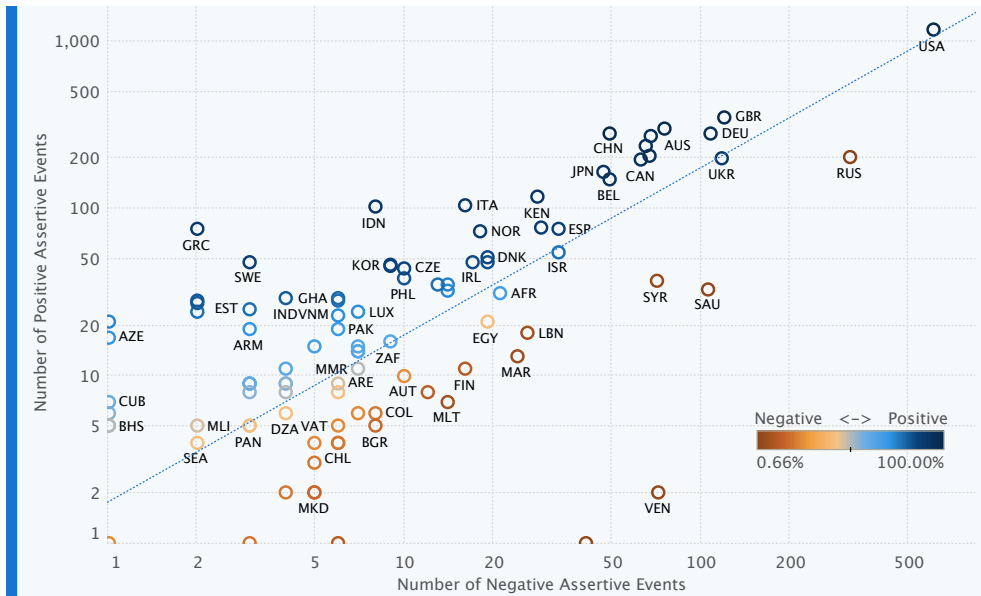


FIGURE 28. POSITIVE VS. NEGATIVE ASSERTIVENESS TARGETING THE NETHERLANDS.

Figure 28 – which we suspect might be of particular interest to our politicians and civil servants – shows the balance between the absolute numbers of positive and the negative assertive events that were targeted in 2014 at the Netherlands by various countries (on a logarithmic scale).<sup>72</sup> The first thing we note is a positive one and pertains to the difference between the scales: the overall number of positive events is significantly higher than the number of negative ones (the horizontal scale has a maximum of 608 events (the US), whereas the vertical scale has a maximum of 1164 (also the US)).

72 This scatterplot excludes NLD itself as well as events with no recognized country.

In overall numbers, we see that the following countries targeted the highest numbers of dyadic events at the Netherlands in 2014:

SOURCE COUNTRY	SUM OF EVENTS
United States	1772
Russia	520
United Kingdom	472
Germany	387
Australia	373
Malaysia	338
China	331
Ukraine	316
Europe	301
France	270
Canada	259
Japan	213
Belgium	199
Kenya	146
Saudi Arabia	139

TABLE 5.

Of particular interest are the countries that are the furthest away from the trend line. These are countries that have engaged in far more negative assertive events towards the Netherlands than in positive ones. The countries that ‘jump out’ of this scatterplot may warrant special attention and effort from the Dutch government’s external action team. If we exclude the countries at the bottom of the scatterplot that initiated only one single positive event towards NLD but at least a few negative ones (Jamaica, Guatemala, Liberia and Ivory Coast), we immediately see the special position taken by Venezuela as the furthest outlier with only 2 positive events, but 72 negative ones. Other countries with higher negatives include first and foremost Russia (318 vs. 202); but also Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco. The interactive version of this visualization also

allows the user to drill down to the actual event triplets: ‘who does what to whom’. The following figure, for instance, shows the top triplets in this dyadic (RUS->NLD) event relationship.



FIGURE 29. RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE NETHERLANDS.

#### 4.6 WHY BALANCED NET ASSESSMENT MATTERS FOR DEFENSE AND SECURITY PLANNERS

Most extant datasets in the field of international conflict tend to focus exclusively on the violent/conflict side of the security coin and entirely ignore its non-violent/cooperative side. It is undoubtedly necessary and useful to look violence in the eye. But is it sufficient? The – often implicit – assumption behind this approach is that security is about conflict, whereas things like arms control negotiations and various other forms of cooperation that may impact security fall outside of this scope. It is often thought that this singular focus on conflict is a self-evident and innocuous inclination of the field of defense and security studies. We violently disagree. We find this one-side approach not only factually inaccurate, but also politically dangerous when it comes to adjudicating policy, financial, institutional and other priorities in the defense and security field.

Global scholarship has now fairly definitively rejected previously popular hypotheses that certain races or religions are genetically or behaviorally more prone to violence. We now assume that a young boy or girl of any race, religion or other descriptive marker can grow up to become an active part on either side of the security coin: the negative (violent) one or the positive (productive) one. Where s/he ends up will depend on a broad range of situational variables. Some of these variables are positive in nature such as education, economic opportunity, effective rule of law, cross-cutting cleavages, efficient political forms of settling group differences, etc. All of these are likely to make that individual and the society in which s/he lives more resilient against outbursts of physical violence. There are, however, also some negative situational variables such as the absence of all (or even a few) of the aforementioned ones in combination with some political entrepreneurs who are able and willing to spin a convincing narrative out of that, which may lure that individual and the society in which s/he lives towards the other side of the coin and into ever more destructive spirals of sectarian hatred and violence. Many of these negative drivers (of security fragility) have been identified in the literature.<sup>73</sup> Some of them may not have, but are more likely to surface in the large-scale ('big') data sets that are starting to come online and that are highly likely to proliferate in the coming decade as the security analysis field finds ways to tap in the avalanche of micro-level data that ever more connected devices and sensors will exhaust.

Why would any of this matter to DSOs? Are they not primarily responsible for the negative side of the coin? Is the intent to 'knock heads' in case a security situation spins out of control somewhere in the world? We are of the opinion that this view of the essence of defense is unnecessarily – and arguably even counterproductively – restrictive. We have been exploring a broader definition of 'defense' as the active component in safeguarding 'security'<sup>74</sup> and the 'military'<sup>75</sup> as the assembly of people who are the active custodians of his

---

73 HCSS has created the Drivers-of-Vulnerability (DoV) Monitor, a web-based interactive mapping platform of global state vulnerability to intrastate conflict, which contains over 50 drivers for 200 countries for 20 years. The DoV Monitor is accessible at <http://www.hcss.nl/dossiers/drivers-of-vulnerability-monitor/21/>

74 For some etymological musings on the origins of these and other military terms, see Stephan De Spiegeleire and Peter Essens, "C2 That! Command and Control over Post-Industrial Armed Forces" (15th International Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium (ICCRTS), Santa Monica, CA, 2010).

75 From the Sanskrit word 'melah', meaning an 'assembly of men'.

‘security’.<sup>76</sup> We see the shifting focus of our DSOs towards more preventive and more comprehensive approaches as a reflection of this changing view of what defense is, and what role the military can play in it. We also submit that there are many highly promising and excellent value-for-money opportunities in those areas of our strategic options portfolio.

---

76 “Online Etymology Dictionary,” accessed April 22, 2015, [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=secure&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=secure&allowed_in_frame=0). This exploration has taken us back to the etymological roots of these words. ‘Se-curity’, for instance, comes from the Latin \*se cura - from the preposition ‘se’ (“free from”) and the noun ‘cura’ (in the sense of “care, sorrow”). This origin - and, we would submit, also its contemporary usage - therefore seems to refer to a **condition** in which people, organizations, countries, societies, etc. can exist, develop, etc ‘free from worries’ about various threats. ‘De-fense’ on the other hand, comes from the Latin verb ‘fendere’, meaning “to ward off, protect, guard” in combination with the prefix ‘de-’, which means “from, away”. These origins thus refer to an **action** in which certain people or systems actively ward off these threats. So contrary to the common usage of these words, in which ‘security’ is typically used as the broader effort and ‘defense’ as the military component within it, their etymological roots suggest ‘security’ as a condition and ‘defense’ as the active effort behind it. Seen from this point of view, we could redefine our defense organizations and our militaries as the active custodians of security with responsibilities for the active efforts on both sides of the coin: both in ‘knocking heads’ when things go wrong, but also in actively strengthening those sources from which security stems.

# 5 CONCLUSION

The debate on international security has been dominated for quite some time by two antithetically opposed and fiercely competitive camps. On one side of the ring, we find the so-called *Realists*. They claim that the world is and has always been a dog-eat-dog world in which competing national actors, unconstrained by any effective institutional, legal or factual impediments, pursue traditional power-maximizing agendas through ‘hard power’ – whether of the military or the economic sort. They think of the world as dynamically linear (reifying states as entities that grow or decline) and mostly focus on the stocks that reside within these territorially defined lines. This leads them to see international relations as the central arena for what is in essence a hierarchical zero-sum game. They tend to be fairly familiar with the political-military history of what they call the Westphalian era and constantly refer to historical precedents from that era in which (especially military) hegemony led to stability and weakness led to conflict. They see recent events as a return, after a brief and unreal reprieve, to Westphalian geo-political – and increasingly also geo-economic – normalcy.

On the other side of the ring, we find those who think of themselves as *Liberalists* or *Liberals*. They claim that in an ever more rules-based, interdependent and globalizing world territory has lost much (though not all) of its salience. Their world is one of flows, in which complex, non-linear markets and networks try to maximize efficiency, thereby in effect cross-cutting the traditional territory-based lines with various emergently dynamic and heterarchical structuring elements. Many of them also believe in power, but then of the more economic and less zero-sum sort. They tend to be much more familiar with the political-economic history of what they call the Industrial Age and their favorite points of reference for strategic interaction tend to come from the economic and business world. They see recent events as a presumably brief transitional and an unreal relapse into vestigial international pathologies that will presumably soon be overtaken by what they see as the inevitable future course of history (see Table 6).

	REALIST WORLDVIEW	LIBERAL WORLDVIEW
Principal actors	Nation States	All Actors
Motivation	Power	Wealth
Domain	Military	Political-Economic
Regulating principle	Balance of Power	Markets and Networks
Structuring principle	Linear	Non-linear
What matters most	Stocks	Flows
Actors to be emulated	19th Century 'Realists'	'The Private Sector'
Era of reference	Westphalian Era	Industrial (and increasingly post-industrial) Age
Nature of interaction	Zero sum	Mixed sum

TABLE 6. REALIST VS LIBERAL WORLDVIEW.

The Realists blame the Liberals for living with their heads in the cloud, ignoring the iron laws of hard power and inviting upon themselves the 'Revenge of Geography'.<sup>77</sup> The Liberals complain that the Realists create self-fulfilling (negative) prophecies that undermine all of the positive (social, economic, technological, political etc.) developments that we have witnessed since World War II and especially in the past few decades.<sup>78</sup>

HCSS in its contributions to the Dutch government's Strategic Monitor has attempted to avoid falling prey to limited, partial narrative fallacies, and go beyond Realist-Liberal juxtapositions based on our overall STRONG approach. The world does not operate according to one Realist or Liberal logic. Instead it is characterized by multiple, sometimes contradictory logics that a prudent planner has to take into account whilst preparing for the future.

The 2015 World Development Report has some wonderful insights about this:

"Individuals do not respond to objective experience but to mental representations of experience. In constructing their mental representations, people use interpretive frames provided by mental models. People have

77 Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2013).

78 Julian Lincoln Simon, ed., *The State of Humanity* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell in association with the Cato Institute, 1995). See also "HumanProgress," accessed April 22, 2015, <http://humanprogress.org/>.



access to multiple and often conflicting mental models. Using a different mental model can change what an individual perceives and how he or she interprets it.<sup>79</sup>

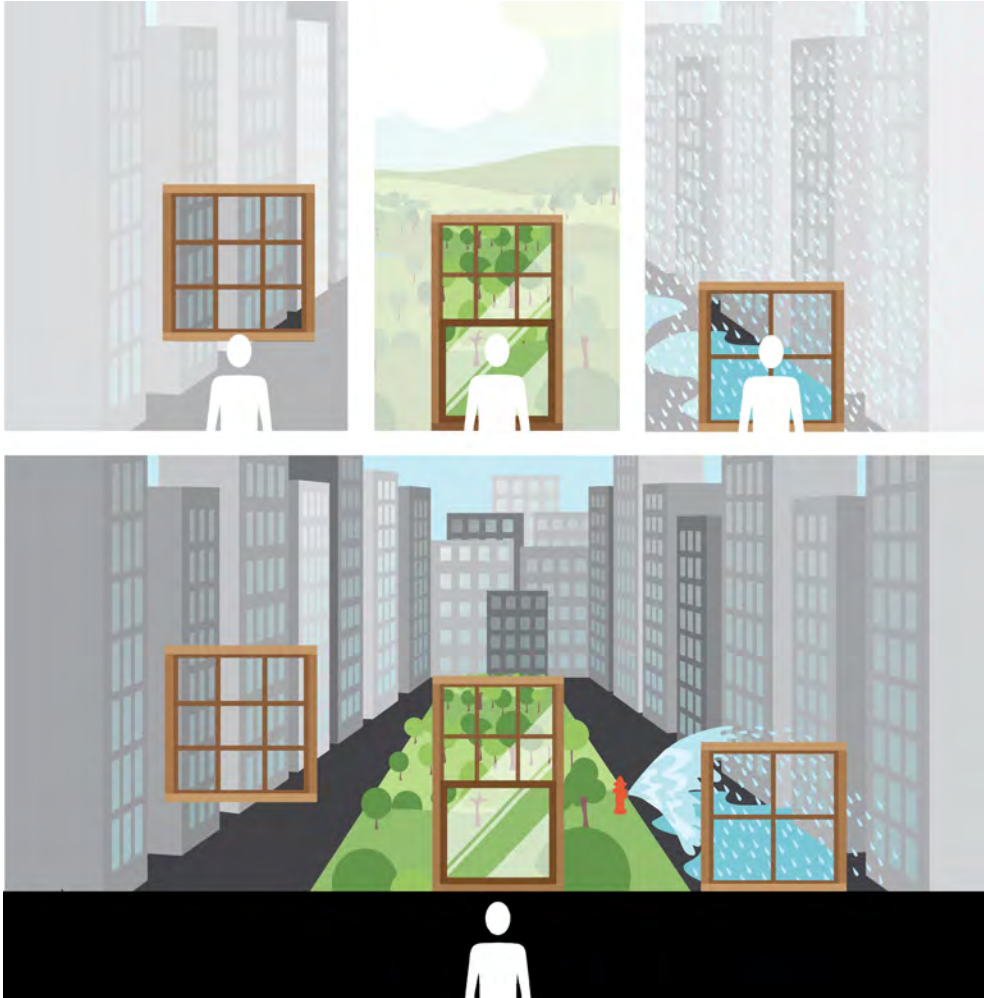


FIGURE 30. PERSPECTIVES AND FRAMING.<sup>80</sup>

79 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, ed., *Mind, Society, and Behavior*, World Development Report 2015 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), 11.

80 Ibid.

The defense and security community is currently still largely dominated by the top part of Figure 30. If we assume for the sake of argument that what the person in this picture is looking at is the future, the top part of the picture illustrates that depending on the 'frame', people (fore-)see very different realities. They are all very real within their frame. But they are also all partial (and thus unreal) from the bigger point of view. We just gave the example of realism and liberalism – less as theories, than as very real mental frames that people in our community use to make sense of their environment. But we could provide many other equally valid examples – between different professional walks of life (businessmen, diplomats, military, technologists, sociologists, etc.); between different geo-cultural groups (e.g. Chinese vs Russian vs African vs ...); between age groups; etc. Our suggestion is that a prudent planner needs to see the true big picture, which is what the bottom part of the picture illustrates. This requires taking a step back from the mental coercion of the individual partial frames, to provide a buffer between yourself and these frames, and to try to absorb the full futurespace. Which in this picture is still a fairly stable and three-dimensional one, but which in reality may be much more dynamic and multi-dimensional. This distance and balance is what HCSS continues to strive for in its strategic orientation efforts.

In this wrap-up of our contributions to the Strategic Monitor this year, we cannot but concur with the dominant opinion of the security analytical community that Europe is increasingly confronting real and urgent security challenges. Russia's overtly aggressive stance under the helm of Vladimir Putin increasingly looks structural rather than conjunctural, as it is increasingly anchored in a number of profound political and social changes in the Russian polity and society. We fear it will be with us for quite some time to come. Territorial conquest, whether rational or not, is back, both along in Europe's immediate Eastern (Russia) and Southern (IS) borders. Religious violence has also returned with an unexpected force and vengeance to Europe's immediate neighborhood and even in its own womb, as some of Europe's children have proved to be willing to go fight religious wars. Pestilence, another one of Europe's historical nightmares, has also been knocking at Europe's doors again in the form of the Ebola virus, which is seen by many as the potential harbinger of other, potentially even more lethal, forms of pandemics. We have called these threats 'ghosts of times (hoped) past', at the same time emphasizing that all of these ghosts are re-appearing in more modern garments. A broader overview of

global violence in the international system shows that the downward trend of violence is stagnating. Multiple conflict hotspots exist in Europe's immediate periphery that are at risk of linking up. The fusion of various types of conflicts and the ways in which conflict actors project power continues to be a persistent challenge to DSOs.

It is impossible to capture the entire futurespace into a report, let alone a yearly one.<sup>81</sup> We therefore try to mix and match various perspectives on the future security environment from year to year. We do not see this necessarily as a disadvantage, as long as the main – dual – task of a strategic monitor remains respected: to provide a more *factual* tracking mechanism for the main big picture currents in the international system that we observe around ourselves and a more *prudential* and contrarian mechanism to juxtaposing those dominant narratives with various big picture countercurrents. After having done much more genuinely forward-looking multi-perspective big picture (meta-)foresight analysis in previous years, we have, this year, taken a special look at some of the ghosts of times past. On top of these, we also already discern the chimera of 'ghosts of times future' including the changing nature of violence in a not so distant future due to “*Robots and Germs, Hackers and Drones*”,<sup>82</sup> to which we will return in future iterations of the strategic monitor. We see these as negative side of the security ledger, which no prudent security and defense planner can ignore.

But we have also made a strong case for a prudential planner's need to sketch the overall big picture by including the other – more positive – side of the ledger. We already noted in chapter 3 that, based on year-to-year country-level datasets, global fragility is still down while global societal resilience is up. But we have always wanted to have a more granular view of what was happening under that surface. To this end, we tweaked the largest currently available event dataset, GDELT, to provide some new insights into the balance between international cooperation and conflict. The GDELT event data show that there is still a great deal more international cooperation in the world than there is international

---

81 We keep working, however, on our broader 'Futurebase', into which all the datasets and 'futuribles' (elements of the future that we cull from our 'metafore' approach) are being deposited and curated.

82 See Benjamin Wittes and Gabriella Blum, *The Future of Violence: Robots and Germs, Hackers and Drones: Confronting A New Age of Threat* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

conflict. We also do not see any dramatic trends upwards or downwards overall – including in the past few years. We suggested there might be a certain churn of international interactions that often gets ignored in our analyses of the peak events that draw the headlines. As we looked at state versus non-state actors, we did see a noticeable uptick in the relative importance of non-state actors since the beginning of this millennium. Their ascendance is not monotonic. We clearly see the double-dip in the world economy reflected in the data – moments at which the state was able to re-assert some of its authority. But the overall trend persists. When we looked at the different types of cooperation, we noticed that about 70% of the event data are ‘verbal cooperation’. When we exclude that category, we see that there is more material conflict than material cooperation. But we also see that although the latter seems to be edging upwards, which is exclusively due to more cooperation between non-state actors, state-actors exhibit declining numbers of cooperative events.

In the rest of our analysis, we looked at some geographical patterns behind these broader trends for 2014. All maps confirmed Europe’s continued singularity, despite all of the current intra-EU troubles, as the leading stable island of international cooperation in a much more checkered global landscape - both as a ‘recipient’ and as a ‘donor’ of cooperation. There was only one category in which Latin America exceeded Europe: as a ‘target’ for cooperation. On the conflict side of the ledger, we saw Russia assume a quite unique position, although even Russia proved less conflictual than the many countries that are at war - many in the now famous belt of instability around Europe. Finally, we were also able, for the first time, to take an in depth look at the role the Netherlands plays in this global big picture. The overall finding here is that the Netherlands is in the enviable position of being the target of a very low number of conflictual events of either a verbal or a material nature. We clearly saw the outpouring of international (verbal) support for the Netherlands in the week of July 17 when MH17 was downed. We noted that the Netherlands – in contrast to its reputation as an increasingly Europe-skeptical country – maintained a highly positive attitude towards (most of) its European neighbors throughout 2014. We were also positively surprised by the positive nature of the former colony Indonesia towards the Netherlands in 2014. Finally, it was encouraging to see that the two leading countries in the international system, the United States and China, were in the top two percentile of the most ‘positive’ countries towards the Netherlands. At the same time, however, our analysis was able to highlight a

number of problem countries that have been initiating significantly more negatively assertive events at the Netherlands than positive ones in 2014. Venezuela jumps out in this list, but also Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco.

When we then try to put these different perspectives back together, we arrive at a decidedly mixed view. As Dutch Armed Forces Commander General Tom Middendorp eloquently said at the 2015 Future Force Conference in the Netherlands – these may very well be the best of times *and* the worst of times. The international system continues to be haunted by a number of (security) ghosts of times past, current and future. But ours is also an age of unprecedented improvements in technological innovation, educational attainment, economic efficiency, political emancipation, global poverty, etc.– all of which have demonstrably beneficial spillover effects in the security realm. The global figures on fragility and on the longer-term trends in conflict we highlighted in this report are still highly encouraging from a historical perspective.

The security challenges we face are real. They require urgent attention but also creative solutions. As Albert Einstein once remarked, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. This year's findings once again strengthen us in our conviction that there is a high need for a more systemic approach to defense and security as one important strand in security and defense planning. Such an approach does not start from an existing capability portfolio, but from a balanced assessment of the overall security futurespace; of the security and defense effects the Netherlands is willing to pursue across it; and then of the capability choices that derive from those. Part of this endeavor is a willingness to envisage a broader notion of 'armed force', one in which DSOs not only operate as firefighters that come in after the outbreak of conflict, but one in which they act as the comprehensive custodians of defense and security. It is time to contemplate a broader portfolio of instruments-of-influence – one that includes instruments that not only allow DSOs to forcefully intervene whenever things go wrong, but to also and equally forcefully strengthen some of the many positive structural trends that we still observe in the international system.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, John Lee. “The Unravelling.” *The New Yorker*, February 23, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/unravelling>.
- “Assessing the Societal and Systemic Impact of Warfare: Coding Guidelines.” *Center for Systemic Peace*. Accessed April 23, 2015. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warcode.htm>.
- Black, Nathan. “When Have Violence Civil Conflicts Spread? Introducing a Dataset of Substate Conflict Contagion.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 6 (November 2013): 751–59.
- Bohr, Niels. “The Perils of Prediction, June 2nd.” *The Economist*. Accessed April 22, 2015. [http://www.economist.com/blogs/theinbox/2007/07/the\\_perils\\_of\\_prediction\\_june](http://www.economist.com/blogs/theinbox/2007/07/the_perils_of_prediction_june).
- Bulldozing the Border Between Iraq and Syria: The Islamic State (Part 5)*, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxX\\_THjtXOw&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxX_THjtXOw&feature=youtube_gdata_player).
- “Celebrating Victory Day and the 70th Anniversary of Sevastopol’s Liberation.” *President of Russia*, May 9, 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20990>.
- Cicero, M. Tullius. “Divination Book I, Section 1.” In *De Senectute De Amicitia De Divinatione*, edited by William Armistead Falconer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923.
- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. Working Paper Series. Center for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), March 13, 2002.
- . “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.” *Oxford University Press* 56, no. 4 (October 2004): 563–95.
- Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom. “Post-Conflict Risks.” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 4 (July 2008): 461–78. doi:10.1177/0022343308091356.

- “Complexities of Coding Syria.” Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014. <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/info/Complexities%20of%20coding%20Syria.pdf>.
- De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Eline Chivot, Joao Silveira, Michelle Yuemin Yang, and Olga Zelinska. *Assessing Assertions of Assertiveness: The Chinese and Russian Cases*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014.
- De Spiegeleire, Stephan, and Peter Essens. “C2 That! Command and Control over Post-Industrial Armed Forces.” Santa Monica, CA, 2010.
- De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijts, Jaakko Kooroshy, and Aurélie Basha i Novosejt. *STRONG in the 21st Century: Strategic Orientation and Navigation Guidance under Deep Uncertainty*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2010.
- De Spiegeleire, Stephan, Tim Sweijts, Peter Wijninga, and Joris Van Esch. *Designing Future Stabilization Efforts*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), September 2014.
- Dixon, Jeffrey. “What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating Quantitative Research Findings.” *International Studies Review* 11, no. 4 (December 2009): 707–35. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2009.00892.x.
- Fazal, Tanisha. “Dead Wrong?: Battle Deaths, Military Medicine, and Exaggerated Reports of War’s Demise.” *International Security* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 95–125.
- Forsberg, Erika. “Transnational Transmitters: Ethnic Kinship Ties and Conflict Contagion 1946-2009.” *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations* 40, no. 2 (2014): 143–65.
- Galtung, Johan, and Mari Holmboe Ruge. “The Structure of Foreign News.” *Journal of Peace Research* 2, no. 1 (March 1965): 64–90.
- Gilovich, Thomas, Dale W. Griffin, and Daniel Kahneman, eds. *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. “Transnational Dimensions of Civil War.” *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 3 (May 2007): 293–309.
- Global Terrorism Index 2014: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*. Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2014.
- Goldstein, Joshua S. *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide*. New York: Plume, 2012.



- Gray, John. "John Gray: Steven Pinker Is Wrong about Violence and War." *The Guardian*, March 13, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/13/john-gray-steven-pinker-wrong-violence-war-declining>.
- Hegre, Havard, Joakim Karlsen, Havard M. Nygard, Havard Strand, and Henrik Urdal. *Predicting Armed Conflict, 2010-2050*. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), July 11, 2009.
- . "Predicting Armed Conflict 2010-2050." *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2013): 250–70.
- "HumanProgress." Accessed April 22, 2015. <http://humanprogress.org/>.
- Human Security Report Project. *Human Security Report 2013: The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation, and Contestation*. Vancouver: Human Security Press, 2014.
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, ed. *Mind, Society, and Behavior*. World Development Report 2015. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015.
- Jones, Daniel M., Stuart A. Bremer, and David J. Singer. "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 163–213.
- Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2013.
- Lengauer, Gunther, Frank Esser, and Rosa Berganza. "Negativity in Political News: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings." *Journalism*, no. Special Issue (2011).
- Libya: Getting Geneva Right*. Middle East and North Africa Report. Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 26, 2015.
- Licht op de Toekomst, Zeven Perspectieven op de Toekomstige Veiligheidsomgeving [Light in the Darkness - Seven Perspectives on the Future Security Environment]*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), February 2012.
- Marshall, Monty G. "CSP - Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2013." *Center for Systemic Peace*, March 2014. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist.htm>.
- . "High Casualty Terrorist Bombings (HCTB): September 11, 1989-March 10, 2014." Center for Systemic Peace, 2014. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/HCTBMar2014list.pdf>.



- Marshall, Monty G., and Benjamin R. Cole. *Global Report 2014: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*. Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, July 23, 2014.
- Mattes, Alexander. "Death Toll in 2014's Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year." Project for the Study of the 21st Century (PS21), 2015.
- McCandless, David. "The MicrobeScope - Infectious Diseases in Context." *Information Is Beautiful*, October 2014. <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/the-microbescope/>.
- Mead, Walter Russell. "The Return of Geopolitics." *Foreign Affairs*, June 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141211/walter-russell-mead/the-return-of-geopolitics>.
- "Militarized Interstate Disputes (v4.1)." *The Correlates of War Project*. Accessed April 22, 2015. <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs>.
- Morris, Ian. *War! What Is It Good for? Conflict and the Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.
- Mueller, John. *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War*. Basic Books, 1989.
- Mueller, John E. *The Remnants of War*. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- "Online Etymology Dictionary." Accessed April 22, 2015. [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=secure&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=secure&allowed_in_frame=0).
- Oosterveld, Willem, Stephan De Spiegeleire, and Tim Sweijs. "Pushing the Boundaries: Territorial Conflict in Today's World." In *Strategic Monitor 2015*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015.
- Perlo-Freeman, Sam, Aude Fleurant, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Siemon T. Wezeman. *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2014*. SIPRI Fact Sheet. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), April 2015. <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1504.pdf>.
- Pettersson, Thérèse. "UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset Codebook (Version 5.0-2014)." Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), June 2014.
- . "UCDP Non-State Conflict Codebook (Version 2.5-2014)." Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014.
- . "UCDP One-Sided Violence Codebook (Version 1.4-June,2014)." Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), June 2014.

- Pinker, Steven. *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. New York: Viking, 2011.
- PS21. “Death Toll in 2014’s Bloodiest Wars Sharply Up on Previous Year.” *PS21*, March 17, 2015. <http://projects21.com/2015/03/17/death-toll-in-2014s-bloodiest-wars-sharply-up-on-previous-year/>.
- Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. Yale Paperbound. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976.
- Schmitt, Eric. “In Battle to Defang ISIS, U.S. Targets Its Psychology.” *The New York Times*, December 28, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html>.
- Simon, Julian Lincoln, ed. *The State of Humanity*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell in association with the Cato Institute, 1995.
- “Strategic Agility and Defence Capability Options: Who Says Generals Can’t Dance?” In *Deelverkenning III: Aanbodzijde. Houvast Voor de Krijgsmacht van de Toekomst [Future Policy Survey]*. The Netherlands Ministry of Defence, 2010.
- Sweijts, Tim, Jasper Ginn, and Stephan De Spiegeleire. “Barbarism and Religion: The Resurgence of Holy Violence.” In *Strategic Monitor 2015*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015.
- Sweijts, Tim, Willem Theo Oosterveld, Emily Knowles, and Menno Schellekens. *Why Are Pivot States So Pivotal? The Role of Pivot States In Regional and Global Security*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), 2014.
- Sweijts, Tim, and Joshua Polchar. “Peace and Conflict Across Time.” The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, January 20, 2014.
- Taleb, Nassim Nicholas. “The ‘Long Peace’ Is a Statistical Illusion.” Accessed April 22, 2015. <http://www.fooledbyrandomness.com/longpeace.pdf>.
- Tetlock, Philip E. *Expert Political Judgment How Good Is It? How Can We Know?*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- The Editorial Board. “President Vladimir Putin’s Dangerous Moves.” *The New York Times*, April 16, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/16/opinion/president-vladimir-putins-dangerous-moves.html>.
- “The GDELT Project.” Accessed April 28, 2015. <http://gdeltproject.org/>.
- Themnér, Lotta. “UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook (Version 4-2014a).” Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 2014.
- Thorp, Gene, and Swati Sharma. “Foreign Fighters Flow to Syria.” *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

world/foreign-fighters-flow-to-syria/2015/01/27/7fa56b70-a631-11e4-a7c2-03d37af98440\_graphic.html.

Ulfelder, Jay. "A Note on Trends in Armed Conflict." *Dart-Throwing Chimp*, March 27, 2015. <https://dartthrowingchimp.wordpress.com/2015/03/27/a-note-on-trends-in-armed-conflict/>.

"Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP): Definitions." *Uppsala University - Department of Peace and Conflict Research*, 2015.

Van Esch, Joris, Frank Bekkers, Stephan De Spiegeleire, and Tim Sweijs. *Strategic Monitor 2014: Four Strategic Challenges*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014.

Wijninga, Peter, Willem Theo Oosterveld, Jan Hendrik Galdiga, and Philipp Marten. "State and Non-State Actors: Beyond the Dichotomy." In *Strategic Monitor 2014: Four Strategic Challenges*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014.

Wittes, Benjamin, and Gabriella Blum. *The Future of Violence: Robots and Germs, Hackers and Drones: Confronting A New Age of Threat*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

Zenko, Micah. "100% Right 0% of the Time." *Foreign Policy*, October 16, 2012. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/16/100-right-0-of-the-time/>.

*The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies

Lange Voorhout 16  
2514 EE The Hague  
The Netherlands

info@hcss.nl  
HCSS.NL